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The results of Friuli Venezia-Giulia regional elections and what can we learn from them

What happened in Friuli Venezia-Giulia?

This week we observed the developments of the election in the region of Friuli Venezia-Giulia, one of the most culturally diverse regions in Italy, where 4 official languages co-exist, and which saw the Lega right-wing alliance win by a 60.69% of the vote in front of 31.9% of the centre-left alliance of Massimo Moretuzzo.

Although the EFA candidate of Patto per la Autonomia managed to increase the percentage of votes which resulted in 5 more seats for the coalition, the election results where no surprise and confirmed the predictions of a right-wing victory.

This election revealed two very concerning trends. First, another electoral victory of the right and far-right parties that endangers the democratic values both in a regional and national level. Second, the increasing abstention rate in the Italian electoral process (the turn up in this election was only 45 %) that reveals a growing discontent among Italian citizens regarding how their problems are being managed.

The results of the last elections draw attention to two important factors. The first one is the necessity of the left-wing parties to work together despite internal differences to be able to defeat the right wing, and that a different approach to politics in the country is required.

A true regionalism is needed

The difference in inequality between a rich north and an impoverished south, is perhaps one of the biggest challenges that the country faces nowadays. The only answer that the Italian right-wing offers to this, are policies that only enlarge the already great gap between north and south.
Furthermore, certain parties of the right like Lega, call themselves regionalists and the only thing they do is maintain social and economic inequalities within their country while completely diminishing the cultural richness of the different regions.

The solution to this is through a model that lays three core foundations:

- More autonomy for the regions is an opportunity for development, not a problem.

- Social rights and civil liberties need to be assured.
- The identity and history of the regions needs to be recognized and respected.

We have to work towards a regionalist project which goes for more economic investment in the poorest part of the country and where regions maintain their current competences but come together in a macro-regional southern entity to better lanage key elements such as education, health and energy.

What challenges and opportunities do we face?

Closing the inequality gap in a country is a necessary step before promoting greater autonomy for regions.

When there is a significant disparity in economic and social development between regions, it can limit the ability of less developed areas to participate fully in the country's political and economic processes. Addressing inequality through policies and programs that promote regional development and equal access to resources can help level the playing field and empower regions to take control of their own futures.

Implementing multilevel government policies and giving local authoritiesgreater decision-making power, makes them better equipped to respond to the specific
needs and challenges of their region. They can tail policies and strategies to local
conditions and preferences, leading to more effective and efficient use of resources. This can stimulate economic growth, create employment opportunities, and improve social conditions.

Furthermore, giving more autonomy to regions can also foster greater participation and engagement from local communities, as they feel more empowered to shape their own future. Giving more autonomy and more opportunities for devolvement for the regions in southern Italy would translate not only into tackling one of the oldest and most pronounced social inequalities in the EU, but also going into untapped economic potential. The centrality of southern Italy in the Mediterranean opens the door to opportunities in the fields of commerce, energy, and the environment. The geographic position of the region, makes it a key player in the EU trade market, been also central to the migration policies of Union.

All these factors, which require the South to step-up and embrace the opportunities, call for a new political approach. One that places the autonomy of regions in the centre of the agenda, resulting in the benefit of all its citizens, without leaving anyone behind. It is crucial to ensure that every European citizen enjoys the same rights, liberties and opportunities despite where they live. When thinking about healthcare, about education, safety at work and minimum wage we must think of these as European rights and thus, we must provide the local entities with the tools and competences to protext those rights and embrace the new opportunities to develop and progress.

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