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By Isabella Arria

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## *Angela Merkel is gone, the Social Democrat Olaf Scholtz has arrived: will anything change in Germany and Europe?*

**Sources:** Strategy

The inauguration of Social Democrat Olaf Scholtz marked the end of 16 years (four terms) of government for conservative Angela Merkel, who came within nine days of breaking Helmut Kohl's record for longevity in power. Scholz, 63, was supported by the Greens (118 seats) and the FDP Liberals (92), who form the new tripartite coalition, in'sollicitous at the German federal level, in power.

"Yes," Scholz told House Speaker Bärbel Bas when asked if she accepted the result of the vote, and President Frank-Walter Steinmeier handed him a record that makes his appointment official and marks the beginning of a term full of questions, but also hopes.

Scholtz will be Germany's ninth chancellor (prime minister) after the war, after his social democratic party won the legislative elections with 206 seats against 197 for the conservative Christian Democratic Union. The new government will be the most equitable in terms of gender equality. Eight of its 16 ministries will be occupied by women, including the four that concern national security and foreign policy: Foreign Affairs, Interior, Defence and Development Aid.

The Social Democratic Party (SPD), the most voted force in the general elections last September with 25.7 percent, has seven ministries, in addition to the Chancellery. On

September 26 there were elections for Parliament, and Angela Merkel, after 16 years as chancellor, did not participate in them. Germany's democracy is parliamentary, so there is no direct election to the office of chancellor. If there were a direct election, according to the polls, the Social Democrat Scholz would have won with 48 percent.

Having gone through many crises in recent years, and even being left for dead, European Social Democracy seems to have turned the page, at least in Germany. Analysts recall that until six months ago, Scholz's ambitions found only compassionate smiles.

For some observers, his candidacy for the SPD was only due to the lack of popular and presentable politicians, and that many had worn out during the Merkel years. Olaf Scholz is an experienced politician, a convinced social democrat and has held many important positions in the party and government. But it is considered reserved and a bit boring. "Scholz is one of those politicians who think intelligently but don't communicate intelligently," *Der Spiegel* wrote.

Rational and quick thinking is part of your personality, but not emotionality, let alone pomposity. Sanity seems to be welcome in times of crisis, knowledge and experience soothe spirits in hectic and uncertain times, and the distance maintained from the SPD's rank and file, usually located further to the left, is a plus point for more conservative people.

Until May, analysts considered Laschet, the candidate of the conservative CDU/CSU alliance and therefore Merkel's successor (CDU), to be most likely to be chancellor. Conservatives had 30% of the preferences. Under Baerbock, a 40-year-old candidate, the Greens were already the country's second-largest political force. In the polls they far outnumbered the SPD.

It seemed that in Germany, as in other Western European countries, the golden age of social democracy had come to an end. The media talked mostly about the most likely coalition scenario: a conservative-green government. Since the end of July, however, the picture has changed and a week before the elections he won with 15 points ahead of Laschet and 17 with respect to Baerbock the pre-election debates.

El programa de gobierno socialdemócrata está enfocado en asuntos de justicia social y laboral, cambio climático, movilidad y transporte, y digitalización.

de rumbo para estimular el crecimiento y el trabajo. Gracias a sus recursos financieros, durante la pandemia Alemania pudo ofrecer un fuerte apoyo estatal a empresas y trabajadores, y Scholz, como ministro de Trabajo de Merkel, jugó un papel decisivo en esa política.

Scholz es considerado un socialdemócrata bastante conservador. Una de sus creencias fundamentales, sin embargo, es que se necesita un Estado capaz de actuar para dar apoyo a los trabajadores y trabajadoras y a las personas de bajos ingresos. Insiste en que todo el mundo debe recibir el pago que realmente merece por su trabajo. Para algunos observadores, el dirigente ha entendido el error de la elite política occidental de enfocar su retórica en “competitividad” y “mérito”.

A very relevant point in the electoral campaign and in the current program of the SPD is the idea of raising the minimum wage to 12 euros an hour, with gender equality. He also suggested that there should be a common legal framework on minimum wage at European Union level.

The SPD program is thus focused on issues of social and labor justice, climate change, mobility and transport and digitalization. The international agenda has not played an important role in these elections, despite conjunctural issues such as the Western defeat in Afghanistan – where Germany had sent 150,000 troops in the last 20 years – migration or other issues that require a common European position.

After 16 years, the conservative Angela Merkel left and now the social democrat Olaf Scholz is in charge: will anything change in German and European politics?

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