

## [Comment] Barroso deserves to be re-elected

RICHARD LAMING

14.09.2009 @ 17:24 CET

EUOBSERVER / COMMENT - If all goes according to schedule, Jose Manuel Barroso will be confirmed in office this week for a second term as president of the European Commission.

He has been nominated by the European Council, representing the heads of state and government, and it is likely that he will get majority support in the European Parliament in a vote on Tuesday.

It is only likely, and not certain, because the Socialists are still holding out against him. The support of the Conservatives, Christian Democrats and Liberals that he has already secured may not be enough, if those three groups cannot ensure that all their members will vote the right way. It is a secret ballot, and who knows whether the line will stick.



But the Socialists continue to oppose Mr Barroso's nomination as a formal position. They are of course entitled to use their political strength within the European Parliament in order to get the policy outcomes they desire; indeed, considering the promises they have made to the voters, they have a duty to oppose him. But I hope they will fail. This is for three reasons.

"There was a swing to the right from the left, and not the other way round in the European elections" (Photo: EUobserver)

First of all, who would they prefer instead? If not Mr Barroso, there will have to be somebody else. But who? The Socialists were silent during the European election campaign itself as to who they would prefer in place of Mr Barroso, after his nomination by the Christian Democrats. They were asked, repeatedly, for the name, including [here](#) in the pages of EUobserver but they refused. They had, and

still have, no better or alternative name to suggest.

The second reason lies in the election results themselves. There was a swing to the right from the left, and not the other way round. An analysis by the UK European Movement of the votes cast in the elections, as opposed to the seats won, shows that there was an overall swing to the right of about 1.9 per cent, while the Socialist share of the vote declined by 1.7 percentage points to only 22.7 per cent. This election result much more closely represents endorsement of Mr Barroso's record than it does rejection. The Socialists cannot claim to be representing wider public opinion. (You can read the analysis [here](#)).

Lastly, this is not the battle to fight. The biggest trend revealed by the election results is not the left/right battle that the Socialists are trying to fight but rather a battle between the mainstream and the fringes. For example, the proportion of the vote that was cast for parties that did not succeed in getting elected more than doubled to 10.4 per cent. And overall turnout declined by 2.5 percentage points to only 43 per cent.

The argument about the very relevance of the European Union as a democratic entity is clearly not yet over. The voting public remains to be convinced.

It is important that the Socialist MEPs represent the people who elected them by arguing and voting for the policies set out in their election manifesto. They need to show that the European Parliament is alive and well as the place where European laws are made.

The Socialists are right to vote against the re-election of Mr Barroso, but they do not deserve to win the vote. Mr Barroso should get another term in office.

*The writer is a commentator on European affairs, based in London, and a member of the board of Federal Union.*