

## M5S and PD face the test of Umbria elections

The regional vote in Umbria on Sunday, November 27, will be the first real test for the M5S-Democratic Party (PD) national ruling coalition. The region went to early voting after the resignation of president Catuscia Marini in May 2019. Former PD governor was in fact investigated together with other members of her own regional council for alleged wrongdoing in health sector hiring. Umbria has long been one of Italy's so-called red regions, or authentic feuds of the left, as well as historically inviolable lands for all other parties. Center-left presidents hold its reins since 1970, although never as in this phase opposition forces see before them the possibility of winning the small Apennine manor. In this regard, the eve's polls designate as favorite League senator Donatella Tesei, a lawyer and former mayor of Montefalco, who is supported by the three main center-right parties (League, Brothers of Italy and Forza Italia) and civic lists such as Tesei President and Civic Umbria. Her main challenger will be the businessman Vincenzo Bianconi, currently president of Federalberghi Umbria and without previous political experiences, who is at the head of grouping consisting of M5S, PD, Green Europe, Green Civic Left and Bianconi for Umbra. Despite supporting the left-wing candidate, Matteo Renzi's Italia Viva party will not be present on the ballot papers and for this reason it won't be possible to evaluate its actual electoral strength. In Umbria, over the last five regional elections, the main party of the center-left area (PDS, Ulivo and PD) had always managed to soar above the 30% of votes. Still, the election trends observed since

the 2014 European elections depict a polling advantage that went eroding almost inexorably. Eventually culminating in the 2018 general elections, when the center-left has definitively lost its scepter of first regional force and the center-right managed to win over 50 percent of the votes. Largely thanks to the League of Matteo Salvini, which jumped from 2.5 in 2014 to 20.2 percent in last year's elections and now up for winning 38 percent of votes, according to the latest polls. The attractive force expressed in this two-year period by the party of Italy's former Interior minister was indeed undeniable, permitting the center-right to advance in practically all region already administered by left-wing governors. Except for Lazio, in 2018 the center-right camp confirmed itself in Lombardy before storming Molise, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Valle d'Aosta and the autonomous province of Trento. The same dynamic was confirmed this year, with victories one after one in Abruzzo, Sardinia, Basilicata and, finally, Piedmont. Of course, the Umbrian vote will also provide important indications on the unprecedented M5S-PD alliance, a fact simply unthinkable until just a few months ago given the political-ideological distance that persists between the former adversaries that now support premier Conte's second administration. We will have to understand whether the pact in support of Bianconi constitutes a mere tactical solution, to stem the "sovereign avalanche" in the name of "progressive responsibility", or the first draft of a strategic project, capable of surviving unscathed to the deadly rifts of Italian politics.