

Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark

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As Europe copes with economic stagnation, center-left parties across the continent have struggled to gain traction. But Helle Thorning-Schmidt, leader of Denmark's Social Democrats, bucked the trend on Sept. 15 by leading her left-leaning bloc to power and ousting the coalition government of Lars Lokke Rasmussen. During the campaign the mother-of-two pledged to end conservative austerity measures, to introduce taxes on the wealthy, and to fire up the economy through increased public spending. But it's not all change. In a nation that prizes consensus, it's unlikely Thorning-Schmidt will stray too far from the stringent anti-immigrant policies laid down by her predecessors who were in alliance with the anti-Islam Danish People's Party. The victory of her left-leaning bloc is the first in Scandinavia since right-wing extremist Anders Breivik carried out his devastating massacre in Norway in July.

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