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Germany's Greens are looking for their place on the political scene

Marta Zawilska-Florczuk

The federal congress of the Green Party was held on 25–27 November in Kiel and focused mainly on state finances. The party for example came up with the proposals of raising the highest tax threshold from 42% to 49%, imposing an additional 1.5% tax on assets worth more than 1 million euros and introducing a minimal wage of 8.5 euros per hour in all sectors. The issue of softening restrictions regarding copyright protection on the Internet was also raised. Ecological issues, which so far had been at the core of the party's manifesto, were not discussed during the congress.

Commentary

- The Green Party has been forced to redefine its role on the German political scene. Since the government coalition decided this spring that Germany would cease to use nuclear power, the Greens have lost the pivotal element of their identity and manifesto based mainly on ecological issues and objection to the use of nuclear energy. A new threat for the Greens has emerged as the Pirate Party is gaining popularity (7%). This party is mainly appealing for increasing access to protected content published on the Internet and is targeted at an electorate similar to that of the Green Party. Support levels for the Greens have been gradually declining from the record-high 28% in spring 2011 to 16% at present.

- Since its successes in the first quarter of 2011 in the elections to the parliaments of Rhineland-Palatinate, Hamburg and most importantly Baden-Württemberg, they have recently sustained a few major defeats. Mainly due to the poor result achieved by the Green Party, which had for a long time been seen as possible winners of the elections to the parliament of Berlin in September this year, The Pirate Party managed to enter the parliament. Moreover, the Greens did not manage to enter into a coalition in Berlin with the SPD, which chose the Christian Democrats as their coalition partners. In turn, the Green Party/SPD government coalition in Baden-Württemberg lost a referendum against the development of the Stuttgart railway station on 27 November.

- Focusing only on financial issues during the congress is an attempt to build an image showing that this party is also competent in areas other than ecology or protecting minority rights. This was also its response to the predominance of topics linked to the

eurozone crisis in the public debate. However, this party did not put forward any landmark proposals to improve the health of public finances. Those announced at the congress had already been included in the Greens' programme before the elections to the Bundestag in 2009. Emphasising the party's left-wing profile was intended at make the Greens more attractive to the SPD before the parliamentary elections in 2013. The Greens are trying to present themselves as a trustworthy future partner, especially considering the increasingly frequent speculations about the possibility of forming a grand coalition also at the federal level, which is a popular idea in the CDU and the SPD.