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Germany: The first 'Green' prime minister in a German local government

The Green Party/SPD coalition government was formally established on 12 May in Baden-Württemberg. Winfried Kretschmann was nominated prime minister, thus becoming the first representative of the Green Party to hold this post in German history. The Green Party enjoys high support in the big cities in this federal state, while the rest of the electorate remains conservative, which was reflected in the distribution of the votes during the recent elections. The ambitious and expensive social plans of the new government may deepen this divide and result in a reduction of support for the Green Party in other federal states.

Despite similarities in the programmes of the SPD and the Green Party, the two parties will find it difficult to rule Baden-Württemberg. They will have to meet the expectations of their voters. Fulfilment of the promises to which the Social Democrats and the Greens owe their victory in the election – namely withdrawing from the use of nuclear power and withholding the development of the railway station in Stuttgart – may turn out expensive for residents of this federal state. Firstly, the costs of withdrawing from the use of nuclear energy (which now accounts for 52.3% of the energy balance of this land) and development of renewable energy sources are high. Secondly, it will be necessary to pay damages to companies which have won the tender and invested money in the development of the railway station. The lifting of tuition fees for higher education studies may also be an expensive solution. Additional budget revenues are to be received as a result of raising the tax on business activity. The fulfilment of the promises made during the election campaign and the higher financial burden the residents of this federal state will have to take as a result may cause a rapid fall in the support levels for this unusually popular new government, and especially for the Green Party, in Baden-Württemberg. Since the two coalition parties have a very small majority of the votes in parliament (only 4), they will also have difficulties passing those laws which the opposition strongly rejects. If, however, they fail to keep their promises, this may also adversely affect their high approval ratings at the federal level. <zawil>