

The coalition of Christian Democrats and the Greens breaks up in Hamburg

On 28 November, leaders of the Green Party in Hamburg decided to withdraw from the coalition with the CDU. This coalition was established in 2008. The CDU/Green Party government was the only government of this kind at the federal state level in Germany. The quality of co-operation within this new political alliance was treated as a test of a possible further collaboration of the two parties at both the local and federal levels. The Green Party, which has been enjoying record-breaking support on the national scale over the past few months, has decided to leave the coalition because of its increasing political ambitions.

Other facts which contributed to the breakup of the coalition were the lost referendum regarding the educational system in Hamburg (it was the key objective of the local government) and the resignation of Ole von Beust from his functions as the CDU leader and the city mayor in July 2010. However, the main causes for the breakup were the Greens' desire to play a bigger role in the coalition than previously and problems in communication with the new CDU leader Christoph Ahlhaus.

The political ambitions of the Green Party result from the high public support (around 20% on the national scale) the party has been enjoying over the past few months. Its support ratings have also been rising in some federal states which are traditionally governed by the Christian Democrats, as for example in Baden-Württemberg. The Greens are skilfully using the weakening position of the mass parties (the CDU and the SPD), the increasing criticism of the federal government and various public protests (for example against the rebuilding of railway station in Stuttgart or the extension of the period of operation of nuclear reactors). Public opinion polls forecast that the Green party will achieve a good result in most of the seven elections to local parliaments scheduled for 2011. Considering the falling support for the other parties (especially the FDP), it is destined to become a political force without whose participation building majority coalitions will be very difficult. <zawil>