

## Germany: the CDU is vying for the conservative electorate

Chancellor Angela Merkel in her speech on 16 October at the congress of the Christian Democrat youth association, Junge Union, stated that the concept of a multicultural state had failed in Germany. The Christian Democrats had from the beginning rejected the model of Germany as an immigrant country, where different nations and cultures lived alongside each other, an idea which was promoted by the SPD and the Green Party. Merkel's speech, addressed primarily to the conservative wing of the party and its electorate, suggests that foreigners living in Germany will have to meet stricter requirements.

German Christian Democrats in the immigrant policy they propagate support the strongest possible assimilation of foreigners with German society and the 'guiding culture'. What brought new quality to Chancellor Merkel's speech was a stricter tone and the emphasis of immigrants' obligation to integrate with German society.

This move can be seen as an attempt to regain the trust of both the conservatives among the Christian Democrats and the party's conservative electorate, which has been neglected recently. The CDU, which was previously in government coalition with the SPD, was competing with it especially for the centrist electorate. Signs of that included increasing emphasis on pro-family policy and ecology. At present, Angela Merkel and other Christian Democrat politicians are turning more to conservative values, demanding that immigrants should adapt more to the German 'guiding culture'. Since the CDU has recently sustained a major loss in popularity (a fall of 10 percentage points over the past six months in the traditionally Christian Democrat Baden-Württemberg), regaining support from the conservative electorate may turn out to be crucial in 2011, when parliamentary elections will be held in six federal states. <zawil>