

German Euro-sceptics to establish a political party

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The founding congress of a new political party, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), is due to be held on 14 April in Berlin. The interim leadership of this organisation is formed by economics professors, journalists and entrepreneurs who have centred around Professor Bernd Lucke and Konrad Adam, a former publicist of the daily newspaper, *FAZ*. They are all critical of the currency union. Since the emergence of this initiative in February 2013, around 7,000 members have joined the AfD. Furthermore, meetings held by this grouping (for example, in Oberursel near Frankfurt am Main) have attracted great interest from potential voters and the German media.

The new grouping's manifesto will be approved during the first official party congress. The leaders of the AfD have announced that their demands will include: that Germany leave the eurozone and the Deutsche Mark be introduced; that the currency union be dissolved; that financial institutions increase their participation in the costs of the crisis; and that nationwide referendums in Germany be introduced to approve of the transfer of further competences of the federal states to the EU level.

Commentary

- The AfD is a conservative movement which distances itself from the political class and which is attempting to present itself as a new quality grouping on the German political scene through a substantial discussion of the possibilities of dissolving the eurozone. All the other political parties (which are represented in the Bundestag) want the common currency to be preserved and (with the exception of the post-Communist left) generally support Chancellor Angela Merkel's European policy. The new grouping is also an attempted response to the change in the profiles of the formerly conservative (CDU and CSU) and liberal (FDP) parties, which now include social democratic proposals in their agendas, and also to the opposition to this change observed among some of their members and a part of their electorates.
- At this stage, it is difficult to assess the result this grouping could achieve in the parliamentary election scheduled for September this year and the shift in voters' support between political parties. According to pre-election polls published in March, 26% of respondents would be inclined to vote for any party suggesting Germany leave the eurozone (*Focus weekly*), and approximately 6% would like to vote for the AfD in the

upcoming election (*Handelsblatt*). At the same time, most Germans are satisfied with the anti-crisis policy adopted by Chancellor Angela Merkel (65% of respondents in the survey conducted for ARD in April 2013) and want the common currency to be preserved (69% of respondents in the survey conducted by Forsa in April 2013). This will make it difficult for the Euro-sceptic party to achieve a good result. So far, some of the present members of the AfD sought election in Lower Saxony as Wahlalternative 2013 in an alliance with the Free Voters party, and received 1% of the vote.

- The AfD will find it difficult to cross the 5% election threshold in the election to the Bundestag partly due to the lack of: experienced politicians among its members, well-established structures in the federal states, state subsidies, and a precise electoral manifesto. The fact that the election date is pending (for example, a minimum of 2,000 signatures have to be collected in each federal state by 15 July) will serve as a further impediment for this party. The sustainable presence of the AfD on the German political scene will also require an expansion of the party's manifesto; no grouping focused on one issue (for example, the Pirate Party) has yet enjoyed long-lasting broad support in Germany. The present actions are also aimed at preparing the party for the election to the European Parliament in 2014.