

Angela Merkel is the CDU's candidate for chancellor

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Following the CDU's leaders' meeting on 20 November, Angela Merkel announced that she would again seek re-election for the office of chancellor as her party's candidate. She stated that she intended to remain in office for the whole term. When giving the reasons for her decision, Merkel mentioned both the experience she had gained so far and which she wanted to use for the benefit of her country, and also the difficult domestic and international situation. According to a survey conducted by Emnid for *Bild am Sonntag*, 55% Germans want her to lead the government for a fourth term (13 percentage points more than in August) and 39% oppose this (11 percentage points less). Merkel has been the German chancellor since November 2005 and the head of the CDU since April 2000.

Commentary

- Angela Merkel was the CDU's obvious candidate for chancellor. She does not currently have any serious competitors in her party. Her candidacy was also backed by Horst Seehofer from Bavaria's CSU, who had strongly criticised Merkel's policy during the migration crisis. However, Merkel's position in German politics is much weaker than before the election to the Bundestag in 2013, when the CDU was polling at over 40%. This figure now stands at around 33%. The chancellor is no longer a 'driving force' who guarantees a sweeping victory in the election. Therefore, the moment her candidacy was announced was carefully chosen—soon after Barack Obama's visit to Berlin (and during which Obama had backed the chancellor) and at a time of growing support levels for her. The information on her candidacy is also expected to overshadow the success achieved by the SPD on 14 November, when the Christian Democrats accepted Frank-Walter Steinmeier as their candidate for German president.
- Merkel's opponents in the upcoming election have reacted with criticism to the information that she would seek re-election. In the opinion of Katarina Barley, secretary general of the SPD, Merkel has no idea how to solve Germany's problems. The leader of the Green Party, Cem Özdemir, announced he would bring Merkel's mistakes and failures to fulfil her electoral promises to light. In turn, the head of the liberal party FDP, Christian Lindner, concluded that the CDU "has revealed the last ace up its sleeve, unsure whether it will be successful". According to the leader of the Left Party, Bernd Riexinger, the fact that Merkel will seek re-election means that the existing arrangement in German politics will be continued and that another Grand Coalition will be formed after the election in 2017.

- The first signs indicate that Merkel will adopt the image of a protector of Western values in her election campaign, as a counterweight to Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin. The Christian Democrats will want to fight for the votes of supporters of the anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant party, Alternative for Germany (AfD), by attempting to appeal to them by making welfare promises and using slogans of improving security and a hard-line enforcement of regulations with regard to migrants.