

Germany: the new face of Die Linke

Kamil Frymark

During its party congress in Potsdam (19–21 June), the Left Party (Die Linke) elected a new leadership team. The incumbent chair, Ines Schwerdtner, was re-elected (receiving 86% of the vote, compared with 80% in 2024) and is expected to continue playing a central role within the party. Luigi Pantisano was elected as the new co-chair, securing 53% of the vote despite standing unopposed. In addition, delegates elected six deputy chairs, a treasurer and a party secretary. The party also committed its MPs to limiting their remuneration. Following the next elections to the Bundestag and the European Parliament, they are to receive a gross monthly salary of €5,300 and donate any amount above this threshold to social causes.

Die Linke has experienced a surge in popularity in recent months and now commands stable support of approximately 11%. Over the past year, its membership has doubled to 123,000. The party is increasingly shaped by young women from western Germany, who constitute a growing proportion of its membership. Die Linke is currently part of governing coalitions in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Bremen. In the forthcoming elections in Saxony-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Berlin, the party is expected to secure approximately 13–15% of the vote in each of these federal states and may play an important role in the formation of governing coalitions.

Commentary

- **Over the past several months, Die Linke has undergone a significant transformation, becoming increasingly dominated by its western German structures.** The overwhelming majority of its members – 94,000 – reside in western Germany. Moreover, young members are gaining an increasingly influential voice within the party, a development that is likely to shape its policies by driving them in a more radical direction and focusing attention on issues of particular concern to this group of voters, including housing affordability and the cost of living. The average age of Die Linke members is 39, the lowest among the parties represented in the Bundestag, while women account for 45% of the party's membership.
- **Die Linke's rise in popularity has been driven by the appeal of its new leaders, particularly Heidi Reichinnek, the chair of its parliamentary group, as well as by the party's successful election campaign;** in the 2025 Bundestag election, it unexpectedly secured as much as 9% of the vote. The party's strengthening may also have been facilitated by the resolution of its long-running internal conflict with Sahra Wagenknecht, the former co-chair of its parliamentary group, who went on to establish her own party

(see '[The Wagenknecht party. Germany's new protest party](#)'). Die Linke's success also stems from its focus on social issues rather than on disputes over foreign policy, particularly with regard to Russia and the United States.

- **Attitudes towards Israel remain one of the principal issues dividing Die Linke.** During the party congress, following a lengthy and controversial debate, the party adopted a resolution stating that the Israeli military has been committing genocide since 2023. Although party activists had previously used this term, it had been emphasised that it did not constitute the official position of the party. The motion adopted by a majority of delegates abandoned the party's previous description of the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023 as "the largest mass murder of Jews since the Second World War". This was replaced by the phrase "the brutal crimes of Hamas" committed "against the Israeli population". The party condemned anti-Semitism and reaffirmed both Israel's and Palestine's right to exist. A competing and more radical motion, which called for the decriminalisation of opposition to Israel's right to exist, received the support of approximately 30% of delegates, despite being rejected by the party leadership.
- **Die Linke may assume a pivotal role following the state elections in Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania this autumn.** In both cases, cooperation between Die Linke and the CDU may prove necessary in order to prevent the AfD from entering government. Although such cooperation has been formally prohibited since 2018, Christian Democratic minority governments in Thuringia and Saxony have occasionally relied on Die Linke's support, for example, in securing the adoption of state budgets. Formally, the party congress did not determine whether such cooperation would be permissible, leaving the decision to the leadership of the regional party organisations. At the same time, any post-election negotiations may be complicated by remarks made by the newly elected co-chair, Luigi Pantisano, who on the eve of the congress described the policies pursued by the CDU as "fascist". This characterisation was subsequently rejected by Die Linke's regional organisations, including those in eastern Germany.