

Alice Weidel consolidates her leadership of the AfD

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At the AfD party congress held in Erfurt on 4–5 July, approximately 600 delegates elected the party's leadership. Alice Weidel (81.3% of the vote, up from 79.8% in 2024) and Tino Chrupalla (70%, down from 82.7% in 2024) were re-elected as co-chairs (delegates vote separately on each candidate). Neither faced an opposing candidate. Among those elected to the party's executive board were Hannes Gnauck and Sven Tritschler, both close associates of Weidel. The new leadership also includes Stefan Möller, co-chair of the AfD's Thuringia branch, and Katrin Ebner-Steiner from Bavaria, both regarded as close allies of Björn Höcke, co-chair of the AfD in Thuringia and leader of the party's radical faction. The chair of the AfD youth organisation, Generation Deutschland, also was elected to the executive board. In their speeches, delegates emphasised that the AfD, currently leading opinion polls with around 30% support (compared with approximately 22% for the CDU/CSU in second place), has become Germany's new catch-all party (see [Volkspartei](#)), replacing the CDU and the SPD in this role. Weidel emphasised that the party's membership has doubled over the past three years, reaching approximately 75,000. She also argued that the AfD is the only party in Germany that "pursues policies for ordinary people" and accused the CDU of pursuing policies "against the German nation and the interests of our country".

Approximately 40,000 people demonstrated in Erfurt against the party congress, mainly members of left-wing organisations and trade unions. Contrary to expectations based on previous AfD party congresses, the protests remained relatively peaceful. Security was maintained by several thousand police officers.

The winner of the party congress was Weidel, who further consolidated her position, including through the support of the party's radical factions, and is now likely to represent the AfD on her own rather than alongside a co-chair. Björn Höcke also strengthened his influence. The AfD's main objective at the congress was to project party unity ahead of the September state elections in eastern Germany, where it expects to emerge victorious. This required suppressing both policy and personal disputes within the party.

Commentary

- **The party congress demonstrated that Weidel is the AfD's undisputed leader.** Her position rests on broad support among party members in both the eastern and western federal states, the latter being the region from which she originates. Of particular importance is the synergy between the backing of elements within the party's more moderate western branches, including those in Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia, and her tactical alliance with the radical faction centred around Höcke.

Weidel has altered her approach towards Höcke, abandoning her earlier criticism of his actions and statements and, in many cases, openly supporting them. This reflects her conviction that, without the backing of the party's radical wing, the AfD would lose part of its electorate as well as its ability to govern the party effectively. Her position is further reinforced by her popularity on social media, where she has the largest following of any German politician (for example, more than 1.1 million followers on Instagram). Among the party's younger members and supporters, she enjoys a status akin to that of a pop star.

- **Chrupalla's weaker result stemmed from his numerous conflicts with the leadership of the AfD's regional branches.** He criticised mistakes made during the party's state election campaign in Baden-Württemberg in March this year, condemned the employment of politicians' family members in parliamentary offices, and reproached Höcke for statements suggesting that only residents of the eastern federal states are "real Germans", while those in western Germany are merely "German-speaking Americans". Chrupalla's allies were likewise penalised for his stance, **with** none of them **being** elected to the party's executive board.
- **The AfD party congress was intended as a demonstration of party unity ahead of the autumn elections to the state parliaments of Saxony-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Berlin.** Deep divisions over foreign, social, economic and education policy, which continue to exist within the party, played no role during the congress. Deliberately, no debates were held on amendments to the party programme, with a comprehensive revision instead announced for next year. At Weidel's request, a proposal put forward by the party's most radical wing concerning changes to the list of prohibited organisations – membership of which precludes AfD party membership – was removed from the agenda in order to avoid a controversial debate. The co-chair announced that the list would be liberalised within the coming year, signalling her willingness to allow members of some organisations that are currently banned to join the AfD.
- **The AfD is undergoing an increasingly visible process of professionalisation, intended to facilitate its preparations for assuming power in the eastern federal states.** This is reflected in the unusually orderly conduct of the party congress and in the election of several members of the executive board without opposing candidates. The party is also preparing for government by training its own personnel at the party-affiliated Black-Red-Gold Academy (named after the national colours of the Federal Republic of Germany), drawing up lists of prospective senior officials for the eastern federal states, and presenting the programme of a future state government in Saxony-Anhalt.