



Country Issue: Germany



The Relaunch of Europe

Mapping Member States' Reform Interests

Europa

ip Institut für
Europäische Politik

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Institut für Europäische Politik (Institute for European Politics, IEP) is one of the leading foreign and European policy research centres in the Federal Republic of Germany dedicated to the study of European integration.

Further information on the project can be found here:

www.relaunch-europe.eu

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THE RELAUNCH OF EUROPE

MAPPING MEMBER STATES' REFORM INTERESTS

The Relaunch of Europe. Mapping Member States' Reform Interests (RelaunchEU) is a project conducted by the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) on behalf of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) that surveys the implementation prospects for twelve concrete reform proposals. It covers the policy areas of Social Union, Economic and Monetary Union and Defence Union as well as asylum and migration policy and the EU's institutional set-up. Furthermore, it analyses the support for flexible integration and the positioning towards the five scenarios presented in the European Commission's »White Paper on the Future of Europe« of spring 2017. It covers the positions of national governments and of relevant progressive political parties, which received a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the previous European or national elections.¹

The study follows two main objectives: (1) It demonstrates the scope of action for prompt reforms of the EU in the selected policy areas while also taking into account which member states would, under certain conditions, be willing to implement the specific proposals. (2) It empirically determines which member states could belong to an avant-garde group willing to deepen integration.

Researchers from think tanks and research institutions in the member states of the EU-27 compiled information to determine the position of governments and progressive political parties towards the twelve reform proposals. This qualitative analysis reflects the country experts' views and is based on documents such as coalition agreements, government or party programmes, position papers, press releases, interviews, op-ed pieces, and official documents. It presents a snapshot of the discussions within the governments and parties. In order to keep the country issues short, internal debates and deviating opinions cannot be covered in detail. Positions are subject to change, especially following elections and the formation of new governments. The snapshot was taken at the end of September 2017. More recent developments could not be included. Notable exceptions are the country issues of Austria and Germany, which were updated following the latest coalition negotiations.

The study's results are published in English on the website www.relaunch-europe.eu. It presents maps for every actor and reform proposal, 27 country issues and an analytical paper. The paper compares the positions of all actors in all member states of the EU-27 on the twelve concrete reform proposals and presents five flagship-projects, which bear the chance for a relaunch of Europe.

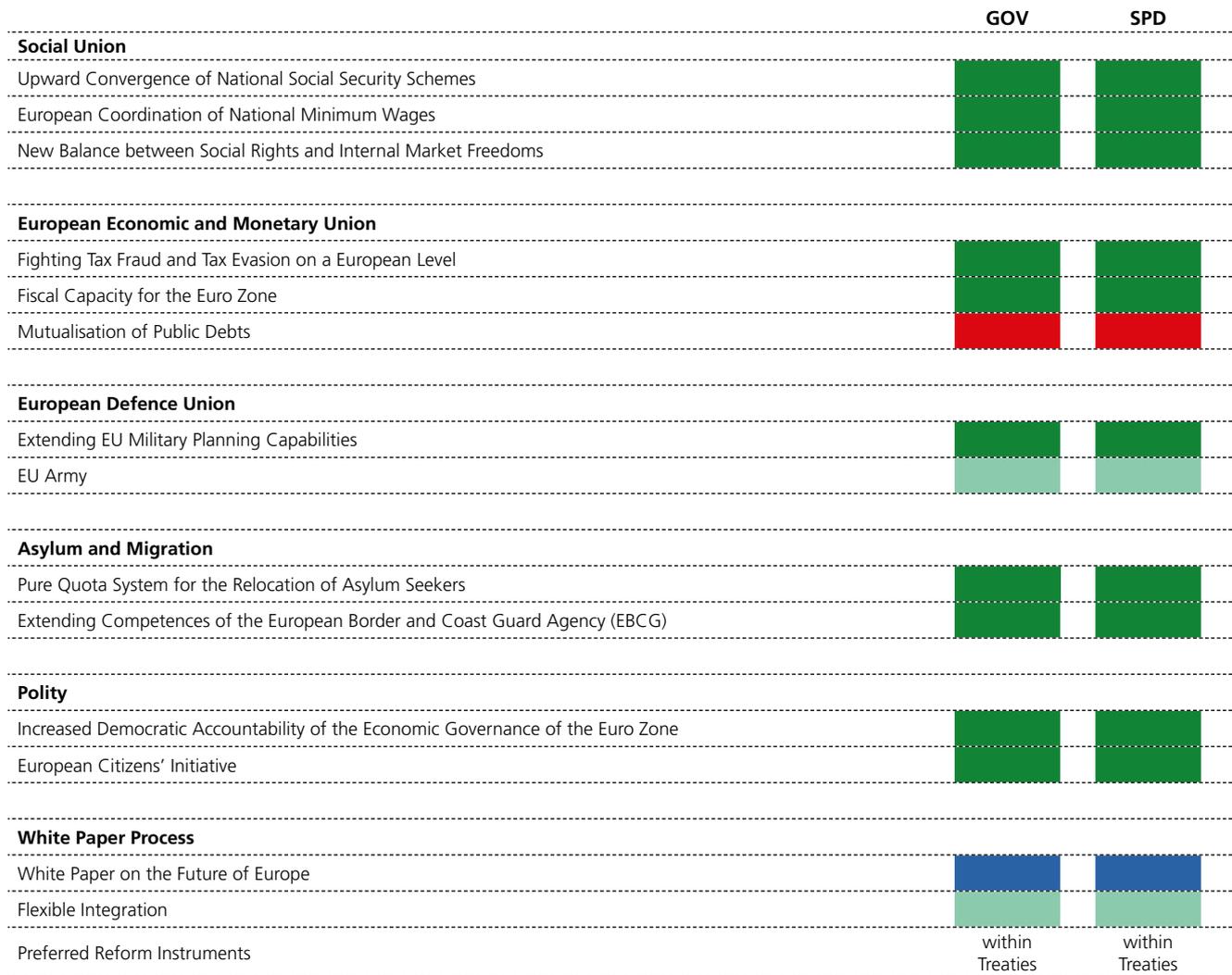
¹ If a party fulfills this criterion, but is not a relevant actor in the national public debate anymore, it was deleted from the sample based on the judgement of the projects' country expert.

GERMANY

Until 2017, Chancellor Angela Merkel presided over a grand coalition of the *Christian Democratic Union* (CDU), its sister party, the *Christian Social Union* (CSU), and the *Social Democratic Party* (SPD). After the general elections in

September 2017, an attempt to form an alternative coalition with the liberal and the green party failed. Instead, the two conservative parties once again negotiated a coalition agreement with the SPD in order to form the current grand coalition.

Support of the Federal Government and the SPD for Deepening EU Integration



Legend

- support for
 - support under conditions
 - against
 - neutral
- GOV** National Government
 - SPD** Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands

- 1 – Scenario 1: »Carrying on«
- 2 – Scenario 2: »Nothing but the single market«
- 3 – Scenario 3: »Those who want more do more«
- 4 – Scenario 4: »Doing less more efficiently«
- 5 – Scenario 5: »Doing much more together«

SOCIAL UNION

In the previous legislature, the SPD-led Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs favoured European initiatives that would lead to an **upward convergence of national social security schemes** in order to enhance social cohesion in the EU and strengthen the legitimacy of the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Accordingly, the SPD has called for European standards of national minimum income schemes as a means to fight social dumping in the European Union. In the coalition agreement, the three governing parties have taken up this project and pledge to launch a European initiative ensuring that all member states provide a decent level of minimum income for their citizens. With regard to the **European coordination of national minimum wages**, the SPD supports a framework directive. National minimum wages should be based on national prosperity and income levels, involving social partners in their definition. The former Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs called for the establishment of a European legal framework for collective and statutory provisions and adjustments of national minimum wages. The new coalition endorses the establishment of a European framework on national minimum wages and social security schemes as well. With regard to the proposal of a **new balance between social rights and internal market freedoms**, both the German government and the SPD are in favour of strengthening social rights across Europe to prevent precarious employment conditions, social and wage dumping by means of a social pact. To this end, the former government worked together with the French government towards a revision of the posted workers directive (96/71/EC), which is also highlighted in the new coalition agreement. The SPD strongly advocates for a social progress protocol annexed to the treaties to ensure a balance between fundamental social rights and internal market freedoms in cases of conflict.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

In general, both the SPD and the government support **fighting tax fraud and tax evasion on a European level**, notably increased transparency, country-by-country reporting and tougher sanctions. Against this background, the government calls for an EU-wide minimum corporate tax rate and a common consolidated tax base for corporate taxation to be promoted within a German-French initiative. With regard to the establishment of a **fiscal capacity for the euro zone**, the government advocates specific budgetary resources to facilitate economic and social convergence and to contribute to the macroeconomic stabilisation of the euro zone. It claims to be willing to increase its own contribution to the EU budget. Moreover, the coalition agreement states that investment shall be promoted through Europe-wide initiatives such as the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI), which in specific should be continued and expanded. The SPD calls for a euro zone budget to cushion asymmetric shocks and to promote

growth, investment, and the creation of jobs. The budget should remain open to the participation of member states outside the euro zone at a later stage. It should be financed by an effective taxation of financial markets or a small share of revenues from a harmonised corporate tax, but not by new debts. The European Stability Mechanism (ESM) shall be transformed into a genuine European Monetary Fund under parliamentary control. The German government has strongly opposed any form of European **mutualisation of public debts**, assuming it would cause moral hazard, while the SPD has distanced itself from any concrete plans.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE UNION

In general, both the government and the SPD are in favour of a European Defence Union. According to the coalition agreement, the European cooperation within the PESCO-framework has to be strengthened and renewed. Having advocated permanent operative EU headquarters for a long time, the former grand coalition (in cooperation with the former French Socialist government) proposed setting up permanent EU headquarters for military operations and civilian missions in 2016, leading to the Council decision on establishing the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) for non-executive operations and missions in March 2017. However, the MPCC has been considered as just one step of **extending EU military planning capabilities** towards establishing EU headquarters. Planning processes within the EU should be organised more efficiently and be harmonised with NATO and existing multi-lateral operative headquarters. The SPD is also in favour of permanent EU military headquarters to centralise European planning, conduct and analysis capabilities. With view to the creation of an **EU army**, both actors' commitment to closer civilian and military cooperation among the EU member states includes the creation of an »Army of the Europeans« as a long-term goal. However, they consider closer cooperation with NATO and parliamentary control as essential. Most of the proposed reform options refer to pooling and sharing of tasks and instruments, like the former government's proposal for common logistical capabilities and the SPD's idea of a joint solution to air policing. The federal government and the SPD consider further integration in defence as a means to increase efficiency and decrease costs.

ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

Both actors support a **pure quota system for the relocation of asylum seekers** based on the principles of solidarity and fair burden-sharing. The new government undertakes to actively engage in the process of reforming the Dublin procedure and to strengthen the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Thus, it advocates for the harmonisation of asylum procedures and standards for care and accommodation. However, it still emphasises the principle of responsibility for the country of first entry and the respect for society's capacities for integrating asylum seekers. However, joint

implementation of asylum procedures as well as repatriations should take place at the EU external borders, in line with European human rights standards. Therefore, the competences and responsibilities of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) could be enhanced, as called for by the last grand coalition. In the past legislators' term, the government considered sanctions, while the SPD demands financial disadvantages in order to oblige EU states to more solidarity. Nevertheless, both had been willing to set further incentives for participation in the mechanism including financial and administrative support. To achieve standardised asylum procedures and conditions, the SPD is open to enhanced cooperation or treaty reform. Both actors' call for the EU to control and manage its external borders and, thus, **extending competences of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)** by developing it into a European border police. However, as long as the external borders are not effectively controlled, internal border controls are acceptable. The former grand coalition also supported the agency's expansion in size. However, it stressed that as long as the agency did not have sufficient personnel, member states would have to provide additional officers. The SPD in particular prioritises the EBCG's mandate for sea rescue and demands the deployment of additional permanent European sea rescue missions.

POLITY

Concerning reforms to **increase the democratic accountability of the economic governance of the euro zone**, the election of the new French President has revitalised claims for a European finance minister in Germany, too. In the past, governmental actors and most prominently the finance minister approved the creation of a finance minister under the condition that the minister possesses sufficient powers and a proper budget to act as a watchdog and to carry out central economic and fiscal surveillance tasks. However, the new coalition agreement does not call for the creation of a European finance minister. As far as democratic accountability of the economic governance of the euro zone is concerned, the coalition agreement merely states that the European Stability Mechanism has to be transformed into a European Monetary Fund and incorporated into EU primary law. It shall be controlled by a strengthened European Parliament. The three parties stress that the national parliaments' right of democratic control should not be touched. For the SPD, a European finance minister, who is accountable to the European Parliament, shall prevent economic and financial risks and provide guidelines for a European investment policy. The SPD recommends a euro zone government, controlled and legitimised by a dedicated committee within the European Parliament. The European Parliament's competences would be strengthened considerably through a comprehensive participation in economic and monetary policies, full budgetary powers and the right of legislative initiative. SPD proposals to reduce the democratic deficit of the euro zone also include the idea of a Euro-Commissioner that is a member of the European Commission and an increased role of national parliaments in the European Semester. In the

long run, the SPD suggests transforming the Commission into a European government being democratically elected by the European Parliament. Both the German government and the SPD consider reforms to make the **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)** more visible and user-friendly necessary. In the past, both demanded measures to raise awareness for the ECI among the general public and to support ECI organisers, notably by EU institutions. Concerning the revision of the ECI regulation, the German government originally expressed support for extending deadlines for collecting statements of support and suggests setting up a central online platform for their collection and verification. However, the ECI is not referenced in the most recent coalition agreement. The SPD demands to lower signatories' minimum age to 16 years EU-wide, to simplify rules for personal data required from signatories as well as to grant more freedom on when to start the collection of signatures once the ECI has been successfully registered.

WHITE PAPER PROCESS

With regard to **»The White Paper on the Future of Europe«**, the former government supported scenario 3, a multi-speed Europe which enables ambitious member states to further integrate, but does not exclude any EU countries from joining in at a later point in time. However, the new coalition agreement does not refer to any of the proposed reform scenarios explicitly. The SPD opposes scenario 2 **»Nothing but the single market«** and 4 **»Doing less more efficiently«** since it deems them to have a negative impact on social and labour rights and to weaken the EU in general. Within the Social Democratic party, the position towards flexible integration is ambiguous: On the one hand, coherence and unity is emphasised. On the other hand, multi-speed Europe is considered to be a realistic option to overcome deadlocks and to advance the integration process. During the last legislators' term, both actors agreed on their support for instruments of **flexible integration** as stipulated by the treaties, under the condition that it would remain open to all member states. According to a former statement of the German chancellor, temporary differentiated integration could initiate new integration projects among interested member states, but should by no means lead to the development of a core Europe. Both actors generally support a more flexible EU in which a group of member states is able to advance specific projects and endorse instruments of flexible integration such as PESCO. None of the actors has set out a general position with regard to treaty reforms. While the government first and foremost supports using the instruments of enhanced cooperation and PESCO, it also considers treaty reform an option, if it is deemed appropriate and necessary for further integration. Transforming the European Stability Mechanism into a European Monetary Fund is such a case. However, treaty changes may not undermine the competences of the German parliament. The SPD supports the transformation of the current treaties into an EU constitution as a long-term goal, focusing on economic integration combined with social progress and more democratic participation.

Legend

Actors Covered by the Study in each EU Member State

- *National Government*: including its members from one or more political parties, the Head of State or Government, relevant executive ministers and administration.
 - *Progressive Parties*: They include all parties that are represented either in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) or that are members of the Party of European Socialists (PES) and have gained a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the last national or European elections. They also include La République en Marche (REM) in France.
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Concrete Reform Options in Different Policy Areas

Social Union

1. *Upward Convergence of National Social Security Schemes* to provide Europe-wide protection against social risks and to ensure a decent standard of living for EU citizens.
 2. *European Coordination of National Minimum Wages* to ensure a decent income within the EU to prevent in-work poverty, to promote social convergence and to avoid social dumping across the EU.
 3. *New Balance of Social Rights and Internal Market Freedoms* to compensate the current precedence of internal market freedoms over national social rights.
-

European Economic and Monetary Union

4. *Fighting Tax Fraud and Tax Evasion on a European Level* for a fair allocation of tax burdens among natural and judicial persons.
 5. *Fiscal Capacity for the Euro Zone* to provide stabilisation against economic shocks through public expenditure in the euro zone.
 6. *Mutualisation of Public Debts* to tackle the problem of a sharp increase in public debts in some member states as a result of the euro zone crisis.
-

European Defence Union

7. *Extending EU Military Planning Capabilities* also for executive military missions and operations.
 8. *EU Army* establishing a permanent multinational military force under European command.
-

Asylum and Migration

9. *Pure Quota System for the Relocation of Asylum Seekers* which would replace the Dublin system.
 10. *More Competences for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)* expanding the current EBCG tasks in terms of »shared responsibility« between the EBCG and national authorities.
-

Polity

11. *Increase Democratic Accountability of the Economic Governance of the Euro Zone* to make its institutions more responsive to EU citizens.
 12. *European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)*: revision of the ECI regulation to make the instrument more citizen-friendly and effective in order to strengthen the participative democracy in the EU.
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White Paper Process

13. *The White Paper on the Future of Europe* by the European Commission presents five possible scenarios for the future course of European integration.
14. *Flexible Integration*: limiting the application of certain rules to certain EU member states.
15. *Preferred Reform Instrument*: Treaty reform, reforms inside or outside the Treaties.

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