

# Germany's Left party plans to scrap NATO, end troop deployments

The socialist Left party has adopted its policy platform for Germany's September general election. Internationally, it is calling for NATO to be replaced and an end to troop deployments.



Among its manifesto commitments, the party advocates an end to all arms exports

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Germany's Left party (Die Linke) on Sunday adopted a national platform with a focus on social care that also calls for the NATO alliance to be scrapped.

Although the party has no realistic chance of forming a government, it could have a say in policy as part of a future coalition.

## What is the Left party promising?

**Foreign policy:** An end to all foreign deployments of the Germany's military, the

Bundeswehr. The party wants to replace NATO with a collective security system involving Russia. In addition, the party advocates an end to all arms exports.

**Climate change:** An energy revamp with a focus on renewable energy. The party also wants to phase out coal by 2030 at the latest and to see Germany climate-neutral by 2035.

**Transport:** The manifesto would commit to a goal of local public transport free of charge, and for rail travel to also become cheaper. There would also be a ban on domestic flights of less than 500 kilometers (310 miles).



## Christian Democratic Union (CDU)

The CDU has traditionally been the main center-right party across Germany, but it shifted toward the center under Chancellor Angela Merkel. The party remains more fiscally and socially conservative compared to parties on the left. It supports membership of the EU and NATO, budgetary discipline at home and abroad, and generally likes the status quo. It is the largest party in the Bundestag.

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## Christian Social Union (CSU)

The CSU is the sister party of the CDU in Bavaria and the two act symbiotically at the national level (CDU/CSU). Despite their similarities, the CSU is generally more conservative than the CDU on social issues. The CSU leader and premier of Bavaria, Markus Söder, ordered crosses in every state building in 2018.

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## Social Democrats (SPD)

The SPD is Germany's oldest political party and the main center-left rival of the CDU/CSU. It shares the CDU/CSU support for the EU and NATO, but it takes a more progressive stance on social issues and welfare policies. It is currently in a coalition government with the CDU/CSU and is trying to win back support under interim leaders Thorsten Schäfer-Gümbel, Manuela Schwesig and Malu Dreyer.

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## Alternative for Germany (AfD)

The new kid on the block is the largest opposition party in the Bundestag. The far-right party was founded in 2013 and entered the Bundestag for the first time in 2017 under the stewardship of Alice Weidel and Alexander Gauland. It is largely united by opposition to Merkel's immigration policy, Euroscepticism, and belief in the alleged dangers posed by Germany's Muslim population.

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## Free Democrats (FDP)

The FDP has traditionally been the kingmaker of German politics. Although it has never received more than 15 percent of the vote, it has formed multiple coalition governments with both the CDU/CSU and SPD. The FDP, today led by Christian Lindner, supports less government spending and lower taxes but takes a progressive stance on social issues such as gay marriage or religion.

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## The Greens

The Greens, led today by Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck, emerged from the environmental movement in the 1980s. Unsurprisingly, it supports efforts to fight climate change and protect the environment. It is also progressive on social issues. But strong divisions have occasionally emerged on other topics. The party famously split in the late 1990s over whether to use military force in Kosovo.

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## The Left

The Left, led by Katja Kipping and Bernd Riexinger, is the most left-wing party in the Bundestag. It supports major redistribution of wealth at home and a pacifist stance abroad, including withdrawing Germany from NATO. It emerged from the successor party to the Socialist Unity Party (SED) that ruled communist East Germany until 1989. Today, it still enjoys most of its support in eastern Germany.

Author: Alexander Pearson

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**Immigration:** The party advocates residence and work permits regardless of employment duration and for the qualifications of non-EU citizens to be recognized. It rejects the notion of deportation, especially where war and persecution are a reality.

**Social care:** The party wants 200,000 more nursing staff in hospitals and nursing homes, and an increase in basic pay for employees. It also wants a statutory staffing level, and for hospital and care groups to be transferred to public ownership.

**Tax:** The party advocates a wealth tax with a progressive rate and an exemption



amount for private assets of €1 million (\$1.2 million). It also wants a tax rate of 53% from €70,000. A wealth tax of 60% is to be levied on incomes of just under €261,000, and 75% on incomes of over €1 million.

**Labor:** A minimum wage of €13 (currently €9.50). Temporary employment and fixed-term contracts without a fixed term would be abolished. The party also proposes a four-day week of around 30 hours as a normal work model.

**Health:** A rent cap throughout Germany. The Left party also wants to promote social housing construction with €15 billion annually.

**Pensions:** The Left party wants to introduce a minimum pension of €1,200. Instead of retirement at 67, employees should again be able to retire at 65 at the latest without deductions.

Janine Wissler and Dietmar Bartsch, who are the co-leader of the party and the co-leader of its parliamentary faction respectively, are to be the party's flagbearers in the lead up to the September 26 election.

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