

# Merkel on brink: Support for Germany coalition PLUMMETS to ALL-TIME LOW

SUPPORT for Angela Merkel's German coalition has plummeted to its lowest ever level, a new poll has suggested, with the beleaguered Chancellor beset by problems on all sides as she desperately tries to hold her Government together.



Angela Merkel's coalition is more unpopular than it has ever been, the poll suggests (Image: GETTY)

The ARD DeutschlandTrend survey put support for Mrs Merkel's conservative alliance – between her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian allies, the Christian Social Union (CSU) – at 28 percent, down one point from September 6, its lowest ever figure.

Mrs Merkel, who has led Germany since 2005, only narrowly averted the collapse of her coalition government in June after a row between the CDU and the CSU over immigration policy.

The conservative sister parties and their Social Democrat Party (SPD) junior coalition partners this week agreed to oust the head of the BfV domestic agency

over accusations that he harboured sympathies to the far-right - but only by effectively giving him a promotion.

The decision to give Hans-Georg Maassen a deputy minister position at the interior ministry was derided as a bad compromise which allowed the ruling parties to paper over deep differences which could make their coalition unworkable.

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Mr Maassen had come under fire after questioning the veracity of a video appearing to show foreigners being attacked on the streets of Chemnitz by neo-Nazi extremists - in direct contradiction to Mrs Merkel.

He was defended by interior minister - and CSU leader - Horst Seehofer, who is now his direct boss.

However, the CSU has since hinted the decision to give him a new job could now be reversed in response to the criticism.

The telephone poll of 1,035 people, which was conducted between September 17 and 19, also indicated far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) could expect to be the second-largest party in the German Parliament, were an election held

tomorrow.



CSU leader Horst Seehofer is also widely unpopular, according to the survey (Image: GETTY)

The AfD stand on 18 percent, with the SPD on 17 percent, and the Greens on 15 percent.

Overall, the so-called grand coalition would receive 45 percent, meaning a similar alliance next time round would not be possible.

The survey also suggests Mr Seehofer's popularity has also taken a hit, possibly as a result of recent clashes over immigration, with just 28 percent approving of the job he was doing, compared with 59 percent disapproving.

Speaking about the decision to move Mr Maassen into Mr Seehofer's department, Christian Lindner, leader of the Free Democratic Party, which took nine percent in the poll, described the situation as a "farce".

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The decision to move Hans-Georg Maassen to the interior ministry has proved controversial (Image: GETTY)

Speaking to German newspaper Die Welt, he said: "Mrs Merkel is only formally head of government.

"Unfortunately, there is no longer any leadership.

"CDU, CSU and SPD have massively lost confidence in the Maaßen situation."

Meanwhile SPD leader Andrea Nahles has written to Mrs Merkel urging her to change her mind about Mr Maassen's new job.

She said: "The consistently negative reactions from the population show that we were wrong.

"We lost trust instead of restoring it, which should give us cause to pause and rethink the appointment."

A CSU spokesman said it was open to the idea of renegotiating the deal in the face of the resulting criticism.

He explained: "The party leader doesn't rule out talks.

"New consultations make sense if a consensual solution is possible and we are thinking about one at the moment."

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