

Socialist Equality Party of Germany certified to stand in European elections

Our reporter
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The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party—SGP) was unanimously certified to participate in the European elections at a meeting of the Federal Electoral Commission in Berlin on Friday.

As a result, the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) will appear on the ballot throughout Germany in the May 26 election, giving 60.8 million registered voters the opportunity to vote for a socialist alternative to nationalism, war and austerity. The SGP is fielding 11 candidates. It submitted petitions with significantly more than the 4,000 valid signatures required to stand in the election.

Germany is entitled to 96 of the 705 seats in the European parliament, excluding Britain. Unlike a federal or state election, there is no percentage hurdle for representation in the European parliament.

The SGP will use the European elections to engage with broad sections of workers and youth and seek to win them to a socialist programme. The main demands of its campaign concern the struggle against militarism and rearmament, the rise of the far-right, and the assault on jobs, wages, social programmes and democratic rights.

The SGP insists that these demands can be secured only by the working class breaking with the old parties and trade unions, organizing itself independently and fighting for the overthrow of capitalism, which subordinates all social needs to the profit interests of a tiny layer of the super-rich.

The SGP opposes both the European Union, the reactionary character of which is becoming ever more clear, and the right-wing forces that seek to channel opposition to the EU in a nationalist and racist direction. It advocates the United Socialist States of Europe.

Although the party is standing in Germany, its election campaign is directed at workers and young people throughout Europe. The SGP collaborates closely with its sister parties in Britain and France, the Socialist Equality

Party and parti de l'égalité socialiste, as well as with supporters in other European countries.

Of the 41 parties standing in the European elections, the SGP alone is advancing a socialist programme. It is the only party on the ballot with the word “socialist” in its name.

A total of 59 parties and associations submitted applications to participate in the elections, including five for individual German states. The electoral committee considered only whether the applications met legal ballot access requirements, not the content of their programmes. The committee rejected 15 applicants because they failed to submit a sufficient number of valid signatures or did not meet other requirements. Three other applications were withdrawn in advance, including the application from the Blue Party, led by former Alternative for Germany (AfD) leader Frauke Petry.

Most of the approved parties not currently represented in the European parliament focus on single issue topics such as the environment, pensions or democratic questions. Five parties referred to animal protection in their names.

Two Stalinist parties were accepted, the Maoist Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD), which continues to this day to defend Stalin and the Moscow Trials, and the German Communist Party (DKP), which was founded in 1968 as the West German section of the state party in East Germany.

Several right-wing extremist parties will appear on the ballot. Alongside the AfD, which is already represented in the European parliament, they include The Right, Third Way and the National Democratic Party (NPD).

The AfD was represented on the electoral commission for the first time. Georg Pazderski, a former German army officer and leading AfD federal politician, was warmly welcomed by the federal elections coordinator and chairman of the committee, Georg Thiel. When the AfD's

list was dealt with, several internal party matters were discussed that underscored grave deficiencies with regard to the selection of candidates. Thiel went to great lengths to downplay the significance of these deficiencies and asked the AfD representative if he was in agreement with his remarks.

The campaign of The Right features as its lead candidate the 89-year-old Holocaust denier Ursula Haverbeck, who has been convicted on numerous occasions of hate speech. Supporters of the party sat in the front row during the hearing, wearing T-shirts bearing Haverbeck's picture and shouting loudly against other parties. The federal elections coordinator did not object to this. When a representative of another party expressed frustration with the antics of The Right, Thiel scolded that party, to the applause of The Right supporters, and threatened to eject the complaining party from the meeting.

The European elections take place in the context of a revival of the class struggle. Whether in France, Algeria, the US or China, workers are rebelling against the impact of decades of wage reductions and spending cuts. Tens of thousands participated in strikes during recent rounds of collective bargaining in the German public sector to protest the destruction of schools, unbearable working conditions and miserable pay. In the auto industry and other sectors, the largest wave of job cuts in decades is under way. At the same time, the ruling elites are preparing once again for war, investing billions in rearmament.

The SGP is the only party that is advancing a perspective to take forward the struggles of the working class, making its election campaign immensely important for the future of working people in Germany and internationally. During the collection of signatures, the party won strong support among workers and young people.

Marianne Arens, one of the SGP candidates, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, "This is not the first time we have stood in elections and had to gather signatures to do so. But there was a noticeable change this time. We collected many more signatures at the factories than in the past. One can sense that the anger in the factories is boiling over. In the face of low wages and never-ending social spending cuts, many workers feel outrage toward all of the parties in parliament and the trade unions.

"Our reports on strikes and mass protests in other countries, and our perspective of international cooperation against capitalism and the dictatorship of the banks and

corporations met with considerable interest. In and around the auto factories and supplier plants in Stuttgart, we collected over 1,000 signatures."

SGP leader Ulrich Rippert, who is also a candidate, told the WSWs that the struggle against far-right and fascist parties would play a central role in the SGP's election campaign. Without the decisive support of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Left Party, the Greens and the trade unions, the return of German militarism and the strengthening of right-wing extremist forces would not have been possible, he said.

Rippert went on to explain that the SPD is a right-wing party of the state, which represents the interests of the banks, the major corporations, the intelligence agencies and the military. Due to its militarist policies and Agenda 2010 social welfare cuts, the party is deeply despised. The SPD is responding to the rapid decline in its vote by shifting ever further to the right and supporting the AfD.

With the certification of the party's candidacy, the next stage of the SGP election campaign begins. Candidates will explain and discuss the party's programme at meetings across Germany and in other European countries.

The SGP will use social media and other channels to circulate its programme. For this, the party requires the active support and financial assistance of all of those no longer prepared to tolerate the return of war, dictatorship and renewed social spending cuts, and those who support a socialist alternative.

The next important meeting will take place on Saturday, 23 March at the Leipzig Book Fair. Christoph Vandreier, the deputy leader of the SGP, will present his book *Why are They Back?*, which deals with the rise of the far-right, and WSWs International Editorial Board Chairman David North will discuss the new edition of his history of the Fourth International, *The Heritage We Defend*.



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