

Berlin state executive coalition agreement: CDU and SPD focus on increasing state powers

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16 April 2023

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD) have now made public their agreement for the future coalition state government in Germany's capital city under the title "The Best for Berlin." The focus is on providing the security forces with greater powers and resources and on massively attacking democratic rights. (Berlin is one of Germany's 16 constituent states, the eighth-largest by population, with 3.7 million people.)

The draft must be confirmed in a vote by SPD members by April 23, which is considered relatively certain despite some superficial criticism. The SPD Berlin state association already agreed to an alliance with the CDU in February. The state chairwoman and acting Berlin Governing Mayor Franziska Giffey threatened to resign if the state executive committee did not agree.

Right-winger Kai Wegner, chairman of the Berlin CDU, is slated to replace Giffey as Governing Mayor in the grand coalition. Giffey herself is expected to become the new Senator (state minister) for construction. In forming the coalition, both parties are preparing for confrontation with the growing social opposition and its violent suppression.

The February recall state election proved to be a disaster for the coalition of the SPD, Left Party and Greens, which has governed Berlin since 2016 and whose continuation would have been possible. However, these parties together lost nearly a quarter of a million voters—the SPD 111,000, the Left Party 71,000 and Greens 65,000—from the previous election in September 2021, which was annulled by Berlin's Constitutional Court.

The fact that the CDU gained more than ten percent and became the largest vote-getter with 28.2 percent is primarily due to the fact that the SPD, Greens and Left Party are widely hated in the capital because of their right-wing, anti-social policies.

In its short time in government, the SPD-Green-Left Party Senate (state executive) has implemented social attacks, deported refugees and upgraded the police.

The CDU and SPD in coalition will only continue and intensify these policies—the coalition agreement leaves no doubt about this. In addition to numerous irrelevant phrases and declarations of intent, it contains above all plans for a radical law-and-order policy. "It's about strengthening our police and emergency services and making streets and public squares significantly cleaner and safer for everyone," reads the preamble.

The number of police officers was already increased in previous legislative periods, while cuts were made in other areas, such as health and education. Now, another 1,000 posts are to be created in the police and fire departments. In the past, such positions were created almost exclusively in the police, while the fire departments are completely lacking in terms of personnel and equipment.

Wegner stated at the presentation of the coalition agreement: "You will notice that this new coalition stands behind the police." The future Governing Mayor is thus writing a blank check to Berlin's police, notorious for excessive use of force and racism.

The material equipment of the police force is also to be improved. While the capital's schools are falling into disrepair, police stations are to be renovated with special funds. The police are to be equipped with body cams "immediately, permanently and comprehensively." These are also to be used in private places in the future. The use of tasers is to be expanded and provided with a lenient legal basis.

The state government also wants to create the necessary legal foundation for the more extensive monitoring of telecommunications. With the usual reference to the threat of terrorism, the security authorities are to be given easier access to online searches by using special "Trojan" software.

The CDU and SPD also want more surveillance of public spaces, including more video surveillance at "crime-ridden locations." This term can be interpreted in any way, which is

entirely intentional. The expansion of the so-called “no-knife zones” is intended to create additional areas in which police can check people without any reason or suspicion. In fact, this would correspond to a permanent police power to stop and search, which was abolished in Berlin in 2004 due to considerable constitutional concerns. Now it is to be reintroduced through the back door.

With the extension of preventive detention from two to five days, activists and those the authorities find disagreeable can be taken into custody without having committed a crime. To prevent demonstrations in the name of “public order” and to expand the corresponding powers of the police, the coalition plans to curtail the Freedom of Assembly Act. This is a high priority for the CDU and SPD, and is to be accomplished by next year.

The Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as Germany’s domestic secret service is euphemistically called and which is a haven for right-wing extremist conspiracies, is to be “strengthened” like the police and, for example, given easier access to data from telecommunications providers.

When it comes to deporting refugees, Berlin will continue to be one of the federal states with the highest expatriation figures. Even under the SPD-Green-Left Party state executive, deportations were carried out, preferably under the cloak of darkness and with no publicity. Under the new state administration, “voluntary” departures are also to be facilitated. This means the conditions of stay for refugees will be made even more miserable to “encourage” them to return to their home countries.

The SPD and CDU will also continue the racist campaign for a police-state launched under the outgoing government after the so-called “Berlin New Year’s Eve events.” At the time, politicians and the media spread the propaganda that there had been unprecedented violence by predominantly immigrant youths against the security forces. The SPD, Left Party and Greens organized a “summit against youth violence” that threatened young people with “clear consequences for crimes and border violations.” The coalition agreement now states that the results of the summit will be “swiftly implemented.”

While the agreement is very concrete about increasing the powers of the state and domestic security, promising extensive funding, it does not go beyond empty words in the chapter on health and care. In the area of education, too, there is no mention of the dilapidated state of Berlin’s schools and the enormous shortage of teachers.

It is believed the finance portfolio will go to the CDU. The draft agreement speaks of a “solid budgetary policy,” a code phrase indicating that the austerity policies of the previous state administration will be continued and even stepped up.

Housing in Germany’s capital will continue to become more and more of a luxury. The SPD, Greens and Left Party had already ignored a referendum in which a large majority of Berliners voted in favour of expropriating large, private real estate corporations. Wegner and Giffey opposed it from the start and maintain close contact with the real estate lobby.

The incoming administration wants to acquire 15,000 new apartments for the state-owned housing companies. These are to be bought at inflated prices from highly leveraged corporations such as Vonovia, which in this way will be supported with public money so that they can continue to drive up rents.

Vonovia has already announced it will drop all new construction projects in Berlin because of rising interest rates and construction costs. According to Bloomberg, the company’s situation on the Euro Stoxx 50 is steadily deteriorating, and its shares may soon be removed from the index.

The coalition agreement makes clear that a right-wing Senate is about to take over the state executive in Berlin. Giffey is known to be on the far right of the SPD. She is the political heir of former Neukölln district Mayor Heinz Buschkowsky, notorious for his vile racist outbursts against immigrants.

Wegner stands on the right-wing fringe of the CDU/CSU. In the past, he openly expressed solidarity with the far-right former head of the secret service, Hans-Georg Maassen, declaring that the latter could “of course also be a member of the Berlin CDU.”

Even during his time in the CDU youth movement Junge Union, Wegner, now 50, was conspicuous for his right-wing, nationalist views. He explicitly spoke out against a multicultural society and advocated a so-called “Leading German Culture“. In a party conference speech in 2000, he demanded that young people “finally develop a healthy relationship with the nation,” as the *Tagesspiegel* reported. At the time, he also attended an event in Berlin with the now-deceased Austrian far-right leader Jörg Haider.



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