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Germany: Next step towards a new government

SPD party delegates give green light to start coalition talks but increase pressure on own party leaders to bring home some political star prizes



Almost one year after Martin Schulz was elected as new SPD party leader by a smashing 100%, the SPD decided on Sunday to start official coalition talks with Angela Merkel's CDU. At the SPD's party congress, delegates voted by 362 to 279, with one abstention, to press ahead with negotiations. This relatively narrow margin for the supporters of another grand coalition was the result of a recount after an initial show of hands was too close to call.

SPD delegates give party leaders homework for coalition talks

Following months of political deadlock, the SPD brought Germany one step closer to a new government. Remember that the elections were held on 24 September last year. The official coalition talks will start today. Given the very detailed informative talks in January, the official coalition talks should not take too long - if all parties stick to the desired results. However, the SPD delegate pushed the party leaders to renegotiate details of the informative talks regarding the healthcare system, the labour market and immigration, increasing pressure on the SPD to bring some new political achievements from the forthcoming talks. The willingness of the CDU to really re-open some of the most controversial issues seems to be very limited.

Tougher nut to crack is on its way

Almost four months after Election Day, Germany will finally have official coalition talks. Most of the work has been done. A lot will now depend on how many topics the SPD will really want to re-open in the negotiations. However, once there is an official coalition agreement, all SPD party members, more than 440,000, will get the chance to vote for or against it. Compared with Sunday's party congress, this party members' vote will be a much tougher nut to crack.

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