

Germany: Nine more days

The election campaign is close to the finishing line but latest polls suggest complicated coalition talks could be ahead



After the one-and-only live debate between Angela Merkel and challenger Martin Schulz at the beginning of September, this week German public television presented both candidates in two separate individual formats.

Schulz and Merkel both had to answer questions from the audience in a 90-minute live tv debate, and it was the last time German voters had the chance to scrutinise both candidates. In short, the tv shows allowed both Merkel and Schulz to demonstrate much more detailed knowledge on a broad range of topics than they were able to during the live debates. While Schulz tried to position himself as a politician with lots of social empathy and close to the 'ordinary' citizens, Merkel tried to sharpen her reputation as a pragmatic problem-solver.

The only newsworthy item from the TV shows was Merkel confirmed she intended to serve an entire fourth term as chancellor if she was elected.

It seems unlikely that either of the two exploited their last big tv appearances to garner more electoral support as the live debate had more than 16 million viewers while Schulz's appearance on Tuesday only had some 3 million viewers and Merkel's performance yesterday is unlikely to have much more.

In our view, there was only one newsworthy item from the two shows. Last night, Angela Merkel confirmed she intended to serve an entire fourth term as chancellor if she was elected.

Turning to the latest polls, Martin Schulz's SPD has lost further ground against Merkel's CDU. According to a poll by Infratest dimap released yesterday, the CDU currently stands at 37%, while the SPD dropped to a historical all-time-low of 20%. The AfD would currently be the third largest party in the next German parliament with 12%. The FDP would come in at 9.5%, the Left Party at 9% and the Greens at 7.5%.

According to the poll, around 40% of the voters are still undecided. With such an outcome, coalition building would be anything but easy. The only two-party option would be a continuation of the current grand coalition of CDU and SPD, and this is an option that the SPD voters, in particular, are not convinced of.

Currently, some 50% of the SPD voters say they are against a new edition of the current government coalition. An interesting side effect of another grand coalition would be the AfD would become the main opposition leader. The only other alternative – if Election Day would confirm the current polls – would be a coalition of CDU, FDP and Greens.

A coalition, the Germans have labelled as Jamaica coalition due to the associated party colours (black, yellow, green). With these potential results on Election Day, even a minority government of the CDU without any coalition partners should no longer be excluded.

[Read why the German elections could be a giant leap - or setback- for the Eurozone](#)

There are only nine more days before the election campaign comes to an end. And contrary to other recent experiences, the German election campaign seems to remain calm and unexcited until the very last day. Nevertheless, coalition building could become much more complicated than many think.

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