



Elections in Saxony-Anhalt Strengthen CDU

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The elections in Saxony-Anhalt resulted in success for the ruling CDU, which won 37.1% of the votes. The party managed to significantly improve on its 2016 result (by 7.3 percentage points) and increase its advantage over Alternative for Germany (AfD). Although the extreme right maintained the status of the second-strongest force in parliament, it was the first time they suffered losses in regional elections in eastern Germany. The result is also important for the Bundestag election campaigns because it signals to the Greens that winning votes in the east of Germany is still a challenge for them on their way to victory in the federal elections.

What does the election result mean for the CDU?

The success of the Christian Democrats is a major strengthening of the party before the Bundestag elections in September. According to research by the INSA institute, the CDU can count on 26% of the votes, which puts it ahead of its most serious competitor, the Greens, by 5 percentage points. The victory also strengthens the position of CDU leader Armin Laschet: the defeat of the Christian Democrats would be an argument for opponents of [his appointment as candidate for chancellor](#) and destabilise the party in the decisive phase of the campaign before the Bundestag elections. If AfD had won, it would have risked [the emergence of new voices within local CDU structures supporting the establishment of cooperation with the far-right](#). This would have undermined not only the authority of Laschet, who ruled out such a possibility, but also could have induced some of the Christian Democrats' electorate to change their voting preferences during the Bundestag elections.

Does the AfD's result weaken it?

Although AfD remains the strongest opposition force in the state parliament with 20.8% of votes, its support has dropped by 3.5 percentage points, possibly signalling that the party has peaked in eastern Germany, [where it enjoys the most support in the country](#). This factor is significant for the party, which had been gaining support amid various national crises, that it has not managed to harness public sentiment during the pandemic to improve its results—41% of the inhabitants of Saxony-Anhalt were dissatisfied with

management of COVID-19 by the state authorities. The AfD's positioning as a representative of the federal states of the former East Germany also did not help despite it contributing to the party's success [in the 2019 elections in Saxony, Brandenburg](#), and Thuringia.

Which parties will form a government in Saxony-Anhalt?

The construction of the state government by Christian Democrats with SPD and the Greens in 2016 was a kind of political experiment forced by CDU's refusal to cooperate with the AfD and Die Linke. Ultimately, however, the coalition functioned successfully, and Prime Minister Reiner Haseloff declared that he wanted to continue it. However, the election result creates an opportunity for the Christian Democrats to change the composition of the current government. The strengthened representation of the CDU in the Landtag allows it to build a government with SPD, but without the Greens. It cannot be ruled out, however, that CDU, fearing the fragility of the coalition, which would have just a 1-vote majority, will decide to strengthen it. Instead of the Greens, it will choose to cooperate with the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), which return to the local parliament after a 10-year break. The wide range of coalition possibilities avoids the risk of failure to build a new government, which would have destabilised the situation in the federal state just before the federal elections.

How will the result of the election in Saxony-Anhalt affect the Bundestag elections?

In addition to strengthening the Christian Democrats, the elections in Saxony-Anhalt three months before the

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Bundestag elections send an important signal to the Greens: the party only marginally improved on its 2016 result—adding just 0.7 percentage points—despite high ratings at the federal level. The result from Saxony-Anhalt contrasts with the support received during [the elections in Baden-Wittenberg and Rhineland Palatinate](#) in March this year and reveals that the Greens still have a problem with [winning over the electorate in the former East German states](#), where they are still perceived primarily as a party of environmentalists and representing western Germany. The results are also another sign of the

weakening of SPD and Die Linke in this part of Germany. For the far-left, this is a particularly worrying trend, given [the concentration of a large part of its electorate in the former East German states](#). The FDP has reasons to be pleased: three months before the federal elections, the party has managed to enter a regional parliament where the liberals had previously been a niche party. This gives them hope to improve the election result in the upcoming Bundestag elections, increasing the chances of them joining the coalition or strengthening their position as one of the main opposition parties.