Germany’s Politics and the European Union

German parties’ political positions towards Europe on the eve of the 2013 federal elections
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# Contents

4 Executive Summary
5 Methodology

**Political Parties**
6 Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU)
8 Social Democrats (SPD)
10 Free Democrats (FDP)
10 The Left
14 Green Party
16 Pirate Party
18 Alternative for Germany (AfD)

20 Conclusion
Executive Summary

This document analyses the platforms of seven parties participating in the 2013 German Federal Election from an EU federalist perspective. In this document, the platforms are analysed in terms of their position on EU economic policy, internal affairs, foreign policy, and their stance on the further development of EU governance. This analysis reveals that the left-of-centre parties, the Social Democrats and the Greens, have the most federalist-positive perspective of all parties analysed, whereas the Alternative for Germany’s (AfD) platform is highly Eurosceptic. The centre-right parties, the Free Democrats and the Christian Democrats, fall in the middle of this scale, while the Left and the Pirates are particularly difficult to analyse. The fact that none of these parties is strongly in favour of a federal Europe is discussed in the conclusion.
For this analysis, we selected seven German parties and evaluated the sections of their election platforms that related to their position toward Europe. We selected the five parties that are currently represented in the Bundestag, the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), the Left (Die Linke), the Greens (Bündnis 90/die Grünen), the Free Democrats (FDP) and the Social Democrats (SPD). In addition, we selected the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the Pirate Party (Die Piraten) as German media has focused particular attention on their political positions since the election campaign began.

In order to systematically assess the respective parties’ positions towards European integration, we divided our analysis into four broad categories: Economic policy, internal policy, foreign policy and EU governance. We analyzed the party platforms with regard to their respective commitment to European unification. This means that for the category economic policy we researched each party’s positions towards keeping and strengthening the Euro, a European fiscal union, a strong and independent central bank, the merging of respective national debts and further indication that the party is willing to fight for a common European economic policy. Regarding internal policy we searched for statements suggesting that a party’s positions are in line with principles such as sharpening the European identity by promoting a common European cultural and educational policy or working closely together to face the future challenges of European energy policy. For the category foreign policy we looked for passages that show whether a party is in support of better coordinating or even merging the foreign policy of all member states, for example via a common European military. Regarding EU governance we tried to find out what the parties’ plans are for the relevant EU institutions such as the commission, the parliament or the European council and whether they support the idea that in the long run Europe needs a federal government. We also wanted to identify whether the parties are committed to making Europe more democratic, for example by demanding that all European leaders and representatives have to be elected democratically by the European people and have to be equipped with more power and competencies than the members of the European parliament currently are.

If a party’s manifesto showed clear signs that the party is in accord with one or more of the above points, it was awarded a high rating in the respective category. Accordingly if there were clear signs that it opposes one or more of these points it received a low rating. If a party did not even mention one or more important points it also received a low rating with regard to these points. For each category we awarded a maximum of five and a minimum of 0 stars to each party. We then averaged these scores to arrive at an overall ranking with half-star intervals, rounding up to the next available measure.
Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU)

Christlich-Demokratische Union/Christlich-Soziale Union

The Christian Democratic Parliamentary Group in reality is based on two political parties, the Bavarian Christian Social Union and the Christian Democratic Union that is represented in the rest of Germany. The grouping is one of the two major political factions in Germany. The party’s platform is relatively conservative within Germany’s political spectrum and is a strong supporter of Germany's model of a social market economy.

The grouping had dominated German politics for more than a decade until an electoral defeat in 1998. After serving in the parliamentary opposition, it re-entered government under the leadership of Angela Merkel as the senior partner in a Grand Coalition with the Social Democrats. Since 2009 the grouping has governed the country in a coalition with the Free Democrats.

Given the similarity of both the CDU’s and CSU’s manifestos for this election, a common analysis is appropriate here.

Economic Policy

The CDU/CSU emphasize throughout their platform that they are in favour of keeping the Euro as Germany’s currency and that they support the integrity of the Eurozone as it currently stands. In addition, they are in favour of the Stability Pact and support the liquidation of defaulting banks. However, the CDU/CSU emphasizes that the Eurozone is not a debt zone. The party thus rejects Eurobonds and debt sharing throughout the Union, and argues that the EC should maintain stricter budgetary rules.

In addition, the party discusses their vision for the ECB at length. The CDU/CSU is in favour of a European Financial Supervisory Authority and believes that the ECB should function as an independent body.

Internal Policy

As the CDU/CSU claims to be Germany’s Europapartei (Europe Party), it is unsurprising that their platform focuses extensively on their perspectives for EU internal policy. The party draws attention primarily to climate initiatives, consumer and data protection policies, and the free movement of people throughout the Union.

In terms of energy, the CDU/CSU believes in creating an EU-wide energy internal market. They are in favour of the Energy 2020 Strategy, but add that the current carbon scheme must be overhauled with new policies. Concerning
consumer protection, the party supports an EU-wide consumer policy which would include regulations on children’s toys and food labels. Similarly, they support stronger and EU-wide data protection laws. In terms of social policy, the party is against pension schemes based on EU law. They support educational exchanges throughout the Union, as well as work partnerships between EU Member States and greater collaboration to reduce youth unemployment. To achieve these ends, they are committed to reducing bureaucratic red tape that hinders freedom of movement of people. They are in favour of increasing the quality of English-speaking education in Germany, but are generally against the gratuitous use of Anglicisms that are increasingly common in the country and are also in favour of boosting the status of the German language in EU institutions to the same level that English and French are used.

Foreign Policy

The CDU/CSU has an extensive vision for the EU’s foreign policy. Primarily, they support the greater coordination of Member State militaries and the eventual establishment of an EU army. Concerning humanitarian aid, the party believes that EU development and human rights initiatives need to be strengthened and expanded. At the same time, the party maintains that it is against the transference of asylum policy to the EU level. The party is in favour of EU enlargement for countries that adhere to political and social norms already codified in EU law. They also support the Schengen Border Zone and an EU-wide entry and exit register. Finally, they support the establishment of a North Atlantic free trade zone consisting of the Member States and the US.

EU Governance

Relatively little of the CDU/CSU’s platform is dedicated to the subject of EU governance. Their sole entry on this issue is a statement in which they confirm their commitment to the European Union, but that they are not in favour of greater centralization. They also believe that the German-French partnership that has become a persistent and unifying factor of EU affairs should continue, as this partnership, they argue, serves as the Union’s “motor.” Finally, as a Christian democratic party, they also promise to advocate for a clause in the EU Treaty that emphasizes the EU’s Christian heritage.
The Social Democratic Party of Germany is one of the two major political parties in Germany and is part of the Party of European Socialists. Traditionally a strong supporter of an extensive welfare state, it promotes a system of social market economy.

It returned to power in 1998 after serving as the major parliamentary opposition party for a prolonged time. At that time it formed a coalition government under chancellor Gerhard Schröder with the Green Party as their junior partner. The government was re-elected in the federal elections of 2002. After the government called for early elections in 2005, the SPD joined a grand coalition as the junior partner of the CDU/CSU under chancellor Angela Merkel. The party’s current candidate for chancellorship, Peer Steinbrück, served as Minister of Finance in this government. Since 2009 the party has once again lead the parliamentary opposition.

Economic Policy

The Social Democrats criticize the German government’s handling of the European economic crisis. They argue that the conditions under which financial aid have been supplied to struggling countries (i.e., austerity), has worsened the crisis. As opposed to the German government, the SPD does not fear the merging of national debts into one common European debt. The SPD emphasizes that it is on board with debt merging if this is needed to save the union. This clearly shows that the Social Democrats want to achieve many of the economic goals formulated above.

The SPD also demands stronger regulation for financial markets and better banking sector oversight. In addition, they want to fight for the introduction of a European financial transaction tax. The most interesting of the SPD’s proposals is to introduce a European economics government to be controlled by the parliament. This way European fiscal policy could be centralized analogous to the monetary policy of the ECB, which would be a big step towards full economic integration. The party also proposes a European investment and reconstruction fund to kick-start industrial renewal in Europe.

Internal Policy

One particularly strong focus of the SPD’s proposals is energy policy. They want to introduce a German secretary of energy to work with
the respective European partners. The SPD also plans to rebuild European emission trade to spur investment in energy efficient solutions in each Member State.

A significant portion of the SPD’s internal policy platform involves the educational and cultural landscape of the EU. The SPD wants to fight for better recognition of international degrees within the Union. The party also aims to work towards a common European cultural policy to develop a common idea of Europe to spur solidarity beyond economic interests.

**Foreign Policy**

The Social Democrats argue that the EU should have a more common foreign policy and wants to develop the EU so that it is capable of acting as a worldwide promoter of peace. To this end, the SPD argues the national development policies of the EU member states must be better coordinated. Advantages and experiences of single members should be “merged” to create a better, common foreign policy to better promote and protect human rights across the globe. The SPD also plans to keep reforming the German Bundeswehr in accordance with a common European defense policy. Their long-term goal is to establish a common European military, which would be a great leap forward in the process of uniting the member states foreign policies.

Concerning long-term growth of the EU, the SPD wants to remain open to new members and especially urges for reenergized negotiations on Turkey’s EU accession. They also want to work towards visa liberalization between the EU and Russia.

**EU Governance (4 stars)**

According to the SPD, Germany’s long-term goal must be to reconstruct the European Commission into a proper European Government to be elected by the parliament. Until this goal is achieved, the party calls for greater transparency in European elections. Measures must be taken, they argue, to ensure that European citizens are aware of Parliament candidates and their platforms. The SPD plans to only support a president of the European Commission if he or she has campaigned and has been elected as a party’s top candidate. They also want to fight for the introduction of a European economic government (see section on economic policy).
The Free Democratic Party is one of the smaller political parties in Germany. It can be described as a liberal political party and is part of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. It has traditionally been a strong supporter of civil liberties and has increasingly argued for economic liberalism based on ideas of free market capitalism.

In the history of the Federal Republic the Free Democrats have often been the junior partner of both CDU/CSU as well as SPD coalition governments and have returned to this role since 2009 under the chancellorship of CDU’s Angela Merkel in the aftermath of the grand coalition.

**Economic Policy**

For the Free Democrats, currency stability is the most important economic goal. Yet the party argues that Germany should not pay for the “failures” of other countries. Therefore the FDP is absolutely against the merging of national debts, Euro-bonds, EU-wide taxation and similar endeavors. According to the FDP financial aid for struggling Euro-countries must remain linked to obligations to structural reforms and austerity measures. The FDP fears state funding through the ECB and wants to limit its ability to buy state bonds. Therefore the free democrats oppose a number of the economic goals outlined in the preliminaries of this report.

Furthermore the FDP emphasizes its commitment to maintaining Germany’s strong economic position as well as Member States’ economic sovereignty. The party wants individual states to have autonomy in planning their federal budgets.

They also want to increase Germany’s power within the ECB council, as, according to them, Germany’s Bundesbank only has 1 of 17 votes in the council while it carries about one quarter of the total financial risk. Concerning critical economic decisions, the party argues, Germany should have a veto right. The independence of the ECB does therefore rank low on FDP’s list of priorities.
Internal Policy

Concerning energy policy, the party wants to strengthen the European market for renewable energies. They want to reduce the bureaucratic hindrances that stop North African wind and solar energy suppliers entering the European market.

The FDP also aims to strengthen academic exchange programmes such as ERASMUS and wants to enable students to obtain international double degrees more easily. Other than that the FDP is not overly concerned with European internal policy but focuses on inner-German affairs.

Foreign Policy

The FDP’s foreign policy focuses strongly on Germany’s relations with other economic and political giants rather than on the financing of developing countries. The party wants to strengthen cooperation with North America, including pressing ahead with the planned free trade agreement. The FDP stresses the importance of Russia as a partner for the EU but take note of the existing difficulties concerning different views on the importance of universal human rights. The party aims to eventually drop visa requirements for Russia, Turkey and other neighbours of the EU once they have fulfilled necessary preconditions. Most notably, the FDP plans to campaign for a European seat on the UN Security Council.

EU Governance

The FDP is firmly against further European centralization. The party endeavours to downsize the European Commission while strengthening the Council of the European Union. Their aim in this is to reinforce the influence of national governments within EU institutions. All in all, their platform on EU governance revolves around securing Germany’s influence in Europe and avoiding further centralization.
The Left
Die Linke

The Left is one of Germany’s smaller political parties that aims to achieve democratic socialism. It is a member of the Party of the European Left. It is the only party in Germany’s parliament that has never formed part of a government.

The present party is the result of a relatively recent merger between the PDS, the successor to East Germany’s official state party, and a political grouping called WASG that was more established in Western Germany. The party and its main predecessor PDS have a mixed track record of being elected into Germany’s federal parliament in recent times. While it managed to surpass the necessary threshold of 5% in 1998, it failed to enter parliament in 2002. Since 2005 it has been represented in parliament again, having achieved a particular success in the 2009 elections.

Economic Policy

The Left endeavour to change current EU policy and fully reorient both the EU and the Euro. Their vision for the EU includes a reform of the current monetary policy, yet involves keeping the Euro as a European currency. Most notably, the party advocates the abolition of the current capitalist system and demands a leftist economic alternative which they argue would more effectively solve Europe’s current economic difficulties. They therefore would not offer much help in overcoming the crisis while still keeping the original idea of a single European market, which is one of the milestones of European integration.

The party also rejects fiscal packages and any further Euro bailouts. According to Die Linke, the majority of EU financial support should be based on an EU-wide taxation system that would especially affect high-income individuals.

The party is also strongly opposed to “wage dumping” and a North Atlantic free trade area.

Internal Policy

The internal policy of the Left focuses on the improvement of minimum living standards across the EU and the reduction of spending patterns that they believe harm the weakest members of society. Furthermore, the party cam-
campaigns for standardised taxation, which would be enhanced by stopping EU-wide budget cuts and reversing current spending patterns. Furthermore, they want to introduce an EU-wide one-off levy on capital and assets worth at least one million Euro.

While there is some merit to a few of their internal policy ideas, the problem is that, if carried out as the Left suggests, these changes would leave Europe unrecognizable to its citizens and would undermine the original idea of European integration.

**Foreign Policy**

The Left advocates a reworking of various international organisations the EU is a part of. First, the party aims to replace NATO with a collective security system including Russia as a member country. Additionally, they aim to reform the United Nations to the extent that this would result in a fair balance between developed and developing countries. The party’s commitment to anti-military politics stands in the way of one of the key goals of European foreign policy integration, a common European military.

The party’s foreign policy reflects their desire to limit armed conflict and promote peaceful relations with neighbouring countries. This is mirrored in their demand for greater disarmament in the EU including a halt to the production and export of weapons within the Union. The party also demands greater rights within the EU for asylum seekers, which would include giving asylum seekers the right to choose the Member State they wish to reside in. Further debt cancellations for developing countries and an increase in EU development funding are also part of the party’s manifesto.

**EU Governance**

The Left rejects the Lisbon Treaty and aims to change the contractual foundations of the EU. Again, this is a clear sign, that the Left has its very own plan for Europe’s future. This is highlighted by their policy proposal to stop the expansion of the Commission’s competencies. They therefore seem to oppose the introduction of a proper European government, as that would, in a first step, include the furthering of the commission’s competencies.
Today’s Green Party, one of the smaller German parties, is the result of a 1993 merger between the West German Greens and a Party that emerged in the aftermath of communism in Eastern Germany. It is therefore a relatively recent political actor in German politics. It traditionally defends environmentalist values and is also a member of the European Green Party.

The Greens first entered Germany’s federal government as the Social Democrats’ junior partner in 1998 and served in this role until 2005. Since then it has been a part of Germany’s parliamentary opposition.

**Economic Policy**

The Greens provide a strong analysis of the current state of EU economics affairs. The party acknowledges that the southern European countries are not solely responsible for the crisis – an impression that is heavily implied in the platforms of other parties. The Greens further emphasize that Germany needs these countries to regain economic stability as they are important buyers of German exports. As such, any claim that Germany would be better off without the “weak” European countries is nonsense according to this party. Providing further support to all EU Member States is thus critical. The party envisions Eurobonds and a European Banking Union as possible ways to achieve this end.

**Internal Policy**

The Greens emphasize that any European policy is, ultimately, internal policy and that certain European institutions, such as the Schengen treaty, are non-negotiable. Under no circumstances should there be a reintroduction of border controls within the EU according to the Greens.

The internal policy of the Greens also
emphasizes the importance of greater tolerance between EU Member States. The party wants to fight discrimination against other nationalities within the EU. To that end, EU citizens must effectively be able to work anywhere within the Union. The party aims to achieve this by reducing bureaucratic structures that limit workers’ freedom of movement.

As Germany’s primary Green Party, the Greens focus heavily on energy policy throughout their platform. At the EU level, the party demands the EU wide abolition of nuclear power.

**Foreign Policy**

Concerning EU foreign policy the Greens stress that the EU enlargement is not yet finished. They call for the integration of the Balkan states and renewal of negotiations on Turkey’s EU accession.

Concerning development policy, the Greens have realized that the EU is much better suited to effectively help developing countries than is Germany on its own. They criticize Angela Merkel’s government for failing to emphasize development aid, and insist on greater EU-wide support for impoverished nations. Beyond that, the Greens do not offer much that would help to unite European foreign policy.

**EU Governance**

The Greens argue that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit and that European elections play too small a role in EU affairs. They wish to expand the powers of the Parliament in order to improve the level of democracy at the EU level. Furthermore, the Greens want to introduce a European commissioner for economy and currency to be elected by the European parliament.
The Pirate Party is a recent addition to Germany’s political system. It emerged as part of the international movement of Pirate Parties and was officially founded in 2006. Its platform is based on the promotion of a digital information society that upholds individual rights to privacy.

While it failed to enter Germany’s federal legislature in the 2009 elections, it has succeeded in entering four state parliaments.

Economic and Fiscal Policy

The Pirate Party is generally in favour of increased integration of Eurozone economies – including their debts. In their platform, the party emphasizes their commitment to the recapitalization of defaulting banks. In addition, the party is in favour of debt sharing between countries and believes a European “Marshall Plan” should be instituted to aid in the Eurocrisis.

In addition, Die Piraten emphasize the need for transparent credit loaning processes and an independent ECB.

Internal Policy

The party’s internal policy focuses strongly on climate initiatives, social welfare policies, and transparency. The party believes that climate initiatives need to be strengthened and that, above all, renewable energy must become the norm throughout the Union. The Pirate Party supports an EU-wide renewable energy policy and a transport policy that strengthens the role of renewable energy.

In a similar vein, the party’s support of the CAP extends only insofar as agrarian policies are in line with climate and environmental considerations.
The Pirate Party believes that pension and social security schemes should be transferable throughout the EU and support an EU-wide base income. The party is strongly in favour of bilingualism and European schools.

The rest of the party’s internal policy is dedicated to issues surrounding transparency and data protection. Pointing to the recent NSA leaks, The Pirate Party supports a reworking of EU data protection laws. Furthermore, the party believes there should be EU-wide copyright and fair use policies, especially insofar as these would pertain to internet usage. In addition, Die Piraten believe that data on EU officials’ salaries should be publically available.

**Foreign Policy**

The party’s EU foreign policy section is very brief and limited in scope.

Die Piraten primarily argue that the Union’s foreign and security policies should be transparent. Accordingly, European asylum policies should be transferred to the supranational level rather than remaining a competence for each individual Member State.

**EU Governance**

In the Pirate Party’s view, EU governance should revolve primarily around the idea of increasing the EU’s democratic potential overall.

They wish to achieve this by giving Parliament a greater role in the legislative process, by strengthening the prominence of EU citizens’ initiatives introduced in the Lisbon Treaty, and maintaining the current obligation that all states enact referenda before implementing treaty changes.
The Alternative for Germany is a newly founded political party that aims to enter Germany’s federal legislature on a conservative and Euro-sceptic platform. Its main foundational principle is the belief that the Euro is a failed currency and should be abolished. It is not a member of a European-level political party.

Despite its recent foundation in April 2013, its platform has received wide-spread media coverage and has been regularly included in opinion polls for Germany’s federal elections.

**Economic Policy**

0 stars

Most of the AfD’s platform focuses on the dissolution of the currency union. It is thus no surprise that the AfD rejects the Euro, demands an organised breakup of the Eurozone and a reintroduction of national currencies, and wants to halt secondary market interventions by the ECB. The AfD does not, however, call for an immediate breakup of the EU itself.

The Alternative for Germany is also in favour of de-leveraging heavily indebted countries like Greece through a one-time debt cut. The AfD demands that countries respect the “no-bailout clause” established in the Maastricht Treaty, and argues that, if bailouts occur, they should be borne primarily by private creditors rather than national governments.

**Internal Policy (0 stars)**

0 stars

The AfD’s position on EU internal policy is limited. Their sole demand in this respect is that Germany reintroduce its pre-Bologna process university models such as the Dip-
lom- and Staatsexamensstudiengänge, and do away with the current EU-wide Bachelor and Master models.

Foreign Policy

0 stars

The AfD’s position on EU foreign policy is similarly limited in its outlook. The AfD aims to reform EU integration law along the lines of what they refer to as the “Canadian Model.”

EU Governance

0 stars

In their manifesto, the AfD’s Euroscepticism is clearly revealed in its policies relating to EU governance. The party clearly rejects a “Centralised European State” or a transfer union. This is incompatible with a federal state strong enough to tackle Europe’s problem, while increasing regional governance.

The AfD campaigns to reduce EU powers and increase state autonomy based on British Prime Minister David Cameron’s position. Such reforms would consequently imply returning legislative powers to national parliaments in Europe.

With regards to sovereignty, the party demands the legitimisation of all future transfers of sovereignty to the EU through popular referenda.

The party furthermore campaigns to reduce Brussels’s bureaucratic structures and introduce a more transparent EU system.

Finally, the AfD wants to modify EU law in order to enable every Member State to leave the Eurozone and form alternative monetary unions or establish parallel currencies.
Conclusion

P
dU’s analysis reveals that the parties currently competing in the German federal election have markedly different visions for the future of EU integration – and indeed, on the future of the EU itself. The Social Democrats and the Greens, the two established left-of-centre parties, have social and economic policies that demonstrate their commitment to extending EU integration. Their visions of EU institutions also feature a stronger Parliament and more transparent and democratic EU institutions more generally. For this reason, these parties received the highest ratings of all parties analysed.

The established centre-right parties, the FDP and CDU/CSU, were strongly pro-EU in many respects, especially those relating to foreign policy, yet they were hesitant on many economic and social issues that would lead to greater centralisation. For this reason, these parties received lower ratings than the left-of-centre parties.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Alternative for Germany received the lowest rating of all parties included in this analysis. Their platform demonstrates a complete
lack of commitment to EU economic, internal and foreign policies, and has no vision for increasing the competences of the EU institutions.

Our two remaining parties, the Pirate Party and the Left, were particularly hard to evaluate for the purposes of this analysis. Die Piraten seem to be more of a pressure group than a political party, as their platform contained few substantial EU policies aside from those concerning data protection.

Die Linke, Germany’s left-wing party, appears to be very strongly influenced by its anti-capitalist ideological roots. This made it difficult to compare this party’s EU policies with a pro-federalist stance, as it was often hard to tell whether this party’s vision for the EU corresponds at all with the system that currently exists in the EU.

It is clear from this analysis that a pro-EU and a federalist stance are two related, yet fundamentally different concepts. Indeed, parties like the FDP and the CDU/CSU maintain that they are strongly in favour of the European Union, yet they are against increased centralisation and debt sharing. Both the Alternative for Germany and the Left also claim to be “for Europe,” yet their visions of Europe have little to do with the EU that exists today.

Yet even the two parties that received the highest rating in our analysis, the Social Democrats and the Greens, did not receive a top rating in any of the four categories in which they were analysed. It was clear to us that these parties are the most positive toward increased EU integration of those analysed, yet their platforms stop short of promoting a federal European Union.

PDU envisions a centralised Europe in which national resources and debts are shared, policies on social affairs, the environment and education are merged, military funding, asylum policies and humanitarian aid are dealt with at the level of the EU institutions, and ultimately, the Parliament exists as a truly democratic and transparent institution.

Since these seven parties claim to be pro-EU, we urge them to consider this position as they contribute to both the future of Germany and the European Union over the coming years.