

Minority state government in Saxony opens door to cooperation with far-right Alternative for Germany

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On Wednesday, Michael Kretschmer (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) was re-elected state Premier of Saxony. He heads a minority government of the CDU and Social Democrats (SPD), which has only 51 of 120 seats in the state parliament. Nevertheless, Kretschmer received 69 votes in the second round, 18 more than the governing coalition has. Twelve out of 15 members of the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) and six members of the Left Party voted in favour of him.

Unlike in neighbouring Thuringia, where the BSW, a right-wing split-off from the Left Party, governs in a coalition with the CDU and the SPD, negotiations on the BSW participating in the government in Saxony failed in mid-November. However, behind the scenes, there were agreements to involve the BSW and the Left Party in government work.

Kretschmer confirmed this after the election. The election result did not “fall from the sky,” he said, adding that the CDU and SPD had held many talks with “responsible colleagues and factions” in the past few weeks. They had helped to ensure that “we do not descend into chaos today.” He praised the “responsible opposition” and called on them to “all work together.”

BSW leader Sahra Wagenknecht also confirmed that there had been agreements with Kretschmer. She said that they did not want to cause chaos in the formation of the government in the state capital Dresden. The BSW parliamentarians had received “certain promises” and therefore supported the election of Kretschmer. Wagenknecht remained deliberately vague about the content of the promises. She claimed it had been promised that no money would be cut in certain areas and that “certain initiatives” for peace would be made possible.

The Left Party had already indicated its support for Kretschmer the day before the election. Co-state party leader Stefan Hartmann said that the Left Party wanted to act as a “responsible opposition” in the state parliament and participate in the upcoming budget negotiations. He criticised the BSW for breaking off negotiations on government participation. “Even we didn’t expect the façade of responsibility at the BSW to collapse so quickly,” Hartmann said.

The minority government of the right-wing CDU politician

Kretschmer is not only based on the BSW and the Left Party, but also on the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which in Saxony is classified by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as the secret service is called, as being “indisputedly right-wing extremist.” The CDU and SPD have agreed on a so-called consultation mechanism that involves all opposition parties in the work of the government. The so-called “firewall” against the far right, which they otherwise like to invoke, thus proves to be an open door.

In the future, the government will submit proposals and draft legislation to the state parliament at an early stage so that all members of parliament, factions and groups can make suggestions, which will then be incorporated before the state parliament officially deals with them. “This way, we are creating the opportunity for everyone to really participate,” Kretschmer said. “We want people to talk to each other in this Saxony state parliament and for it to be possible to find cross-party compromises.”

Kretschmer explicitly included the AfD in this, wanting to get them out of their “martyr role.” They could then no longer say that no one was talking to them and that they had no opportunity to influence things.

When Kretschmer’s simultaneous claims that distance from the AfD will be maintained and that there would be no working with it, or when SPD state party leader Henning Homann insists that AfD parliamentary deputies would “not be able to exert any practical influence on politics in Saxony with their heretical, anti-social theses,” it is obviously absurd. Consultation *is* cooperation. Why consult the AfD if there are to be no political consequences?

It is worth noting in this context that Kretschmer met with the AfD’s leader in Saxony, Jörg Urban, in the state chancellery on November 4, exactly one day before the exploratory talks with the BSW were abandoned. It was the first such conversation with the leader of the AfD faction, who has been in office since 2017. Afterwards, it was said that they had discussed “state political issues” and agreed to maintain confidentiality about the details.

Last week, Urban even proposed the CDU form a government

supported by the AfD. Together, with 81 seats in the state parliament, they would have a “stable right-wing conservative majority,” he said. The CDU should take the risk and enter into a government completely freely and without the SPD, added AfD General Secretary Jan Zwerg. This idea also has supporters within the CDU among the so-called “Heimatunion” (Homeland Union) around state parliament member Sven Eppinger.

The AfD finally voted against Kretschmer on Wednesday—as far as this can be seen from the secret ballot. In the first ballot, AfD faction leader Jörg Urban received 40 votes, which is exactly the number of AfD members in the state parliament. In the second round, Urban received only one vote, while 39 votes were cast for Matthias Berger, the only member of the “Free Voters” grouping in the state parliament. The AfD had apparently planned to nominate Berger as prime minister in a surprise coup, as it had done in Thuringia in 2020 with Liberal Democrat (FDP) politician Thomas Kemmerich.

The manoeuvre failed because the Left Party and BSW voted for Kretschmer and 11 deputies abstained. Among them were the seven representatives of the Greens, who had made their vote for Kretschmer conditional on his providing more support for Ukraine. However, the Greens also reaffirmed their fundamental willingness to continue working with Kretschmer, in whose government they were involved for the last four years.

The fact that the AfD did not vote for Kretschmer does not rule out future cooperation. In terms of content, they are close. The core points of the AfD programme—anti-refugee agitation, law-and-order, military rearmament and austerity—have long since been adopted by the other parties. The relevant passages in the coalition agreement between the CDU and SPD could have been written by the AfD.

The new state government has pledged to “increase the number of police officers to 15,000 by the end of the legislative period.” The police are to work more closely with the domestic intelligence service, the state criminal police office and the domestic intelligence service are to be strengthened in terms of personnel and technology, a Saxony border police force is to be set up and telecommunications source surveillance (Quellen-TKÜ) is to be made possible.

Skilled workers among migrants are to be recruited, but the rest are to be brutally deported. “People who do not fulfil the conditions for residence must leave our country as quickly as possible,” the coalition agreement states. “Those who do not leave voluntarily will be deported.”

The improvements the agreement promises in the areas of social services, education and culture are all subject to funding. In other words, they are not worth the paper they are written on.

“The current difficult economic situation in Germany and the associated stagnating tax revenues mean that the structurally balanced budget presents us with enormous challenges,” the coalition agreement states. “We must therefore set clear priorities in the state budget in the coming years.”

There is a huge €4 billion hole in the state budget. Finance Minister Hartmut Vorjohann (CDU) had to withdraw a draft budget that proposed cuts of 50 to 80 percent in some areas because the previous cabinet could not agree on it.

Behind the minority government in Saxony—unusual by German standards—lies in reality an all-party coalition, ranging from the Left Party and BSW to the Greens, SPD and CDU, and the AfD. The establishment parties are moving closer together and further to the right because they are in conflict with the broad majority of the population, who are not willing to accept war, social cuts, falling wages and job losses.

Saxony is no exception. All over the world, those in power are reacting to the deep crisis of capitalism with a sharp lurch to the right. This is demonstrated by the rise of fascists like Donald Trump, Georgia Meloni, Geert Wilders and Javier Milei to the highest state offices.

Saxony, an important industrial centre since the 19th century, has never recovered from the devastation that followed the dissolution of the former East Germany. Now, even the jobs that have been created since then—the VW plants in Zwickau, Chemnitz and Dresden, the numerous companies dependent on them, the computer chip industry in the Dresden area, which is subsidised by billions, and many more—are also at risk.

Workers must prepare themselves for the coming social attacks by breaking with the all-party coalition and its affiliated trade unions and build a new party that fights for the international unity of the working class and a socialist society in which the needs of the majority take precedence over the profit interests of the rich—the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party).



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