EU HEADLINES

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN DEBATES

Alternative reality

The exposure of the forced deportation plans of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party was the last straw for thousand hundreds of Germans who took to the streets to protest extremism, anti-immigrant rhetoric and to stand for democracy in their country.

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Stand your ground

Reminiscent of the 1989 protests, thousands of Germans braved the city streets all over the country to take a stand against the rise of far-right extremism and misanthropy all through this week. Following the exposure of forced deportation plans, discussed during the covert meeting of the far-right politicians and extremists in Potsdam, the roads and squares of Leipzig, Erfurt, Dresden, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Cologne, Bremen, Cottbus, Berlin, Chemnitz and Munich saw crowds of tens of thousands of protesters, unprecedented in recent years. Defying the expectations of the organisers, as reported by *24chasa.bg*, around 80,000 people showed up to the demonstration in Munich, while Berlin boasted an even larger crowd of 100,000 to 350,000 participants, according to different estimates. Against the backdrop of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party leading opinion polls in three former East German states scheduled to hold elections this year and drawing eerie parallels with the rise of Nazism, the protesters united in their condemnation of anti-immigrant rhetoric and in their willingness to defend German democracy.

Read the full article



For whom the bell tolls

As Alternative for Germany (AfD's) popularity is climbing in polls, *Pravda* sat down with Kai Arzheimer, professor of Political Science at the University of Mainz, to discuss the reasons behind the party's support, which has almost doubled since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. According to the professor, instability, fear for the future, the energy crisis, and the influx of around 1.5 million people from Ukraine equipped the far-right to better mobilise its supporters, exploiting the established narratives of "foreigners taking over" or "the West selling them out". Moreover, many are dissatisfied with the left-wing political scene, characterised by a lack of unity. The portrait of the typical AfD voter is typically one of a lower-middle to middle-class man, somewhat below-average educated, white and middle-aged, which partly explains why the AfD enjoys more widespread support in eastern Germany, where 30-35% of constituents would vote for the party. Nevertheless, the 20-22% national average support of the AfD's pledges to withdraw from the European Union and the Eurozone and to deport people of foreign origin is of grave concern, especially when analysed in the wider framework of the far-right asserting itself in European governments, concludes Prof. Arzheimer.

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AfDon't

The Kurier explores the avenues to stem the seemingly inexorable rise in popularity of the German far-right party, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). Legal actions are now being discussed against the party, especially considering that it is classified in three federal states as "right wing extremist". A minority is calling for an outright ban of the AfD; however, the government and the opposition doubt that it would be effective, as the procedure would take years and success is not guaranteed. Politicians also underline that the far-right party would use this as a martyr tactic that would only fuel its popularity, especially if the process drags on. It was also suggested that individual AfD politicians could be deprived of the right to be elected. However, the hurdles with this procedure are also very high and the government does not consider it a viable solution. Another route that has long been debated would be to cut the state funding of the party. No set course has been decided, and the various political forces blame each other for the continuous rise of the party. The conservatives pin it on the current coalition policies while the Socialists and Greens criticise the right for pandering to the AfD narratives with anti-migration positions.

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Keeping up with the Müllers

Looking on from next door, the editorial board of *Tageblatt* shares the Luxembourgish perspective on Germany's AfD problem and internal backlash against its extremist policies – especially after recent reports of the surreptitious meeting that took place in November floating mass deportation or "remigration" plans. The core of the editorial is a question that many in the West have asked in recent years – are our citizens and politicians actually moving this far to the right, or will this be a breaking point for extremist rhetoric? The article highlights two significant ways for citizens to continue to combat the far right. First, the degree to which the German population have taken to the streets to show their disapproval not just to the AfD, but to Europe as a whole – which, the editorial notes, could have happened sooner. Second, crucially, is mobilising voters throughout Europe to vote against the far right, especially in light of favourable polling for the AfD in several parts of Germany. Furthermore, the right-wing groups ECR and ID in the European Parliament are polling strongly in the upcoming European elections in countries such as France, Italy, Austria and the Netherlands. Returning to the local focus, the editorial calls on its readers to reject the right, for Luxembourg and for Europe.

Read the full article

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