

Battle for Merkel's throne intensifies

Two frontrunners with opposing visions are vying to succeed Angela Merkel as leader of Germany's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in a crucial vote for the future of EU's dominant country



Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer 56

- Known as AKK, she is Merkel protege and seen as candidate of continuity

- Prime minister of small state of Saarland for seven years before becoming CDU's general secretary in February 2018

- AKK belongs to liberal wing of CDU and strongly backs national minimum wage and workers' rights. But she also espouses traditional family values and is opposed to abortion and same-sex marriage

Friedrich Merz 63

- Leader of CDU group in parliament before being pushed out by Merkel in 2002

- Quit Bundestag in 2009 to work as corporate lawyer and to serve as chairman of supervisory board of German arm of U.S. hedge fund *BlackRock*

- From conservative wing of CDU, Merz is backed by party members keen to see end to Merkel's politics of compromise



Jens Spahn 38

- Openly gay candidate has distinguished himself as conservative critic of Merkel while serving in government as health minister

- Poor showing in polls, thanks to statements about refugee policies which have polarised popular opinion