

# Candidates vying to succeed Merkel

As Angela Merkel prepares to step down after 16 years in office, her Christian Democratic Union party chooses its new leader – and possibly Germany's new Chancellor – ahead of September's federal election



**Armin Laschet, 59**

- Popular premier of North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany's most populous state

- Seen as front runner when he launched candidacy in February, but hesitance in dealing with coronavirus crisis has cost him some support

- Positions himself as Merkel's natural heir – someone who will keep CDU together and maintain centrist course



**Friedrich Merz, 65**

- Former leader of CDU parliamentary group lost power struggle to Merkel in 2002

- Millionaire lawyer and former chairman of **BlackRock Germany**, made political comeback in 2018. He is front runner, according to recent opinion poll

- Vows to make CDU more conservative and win back voters who defected to far-right **Alternative for Germany (AfD)**



**Norbert Röttgen, 55**

- Head of Bundestag's foreign affairs committee

- German environment minister in 2009-2012. Sacked by Merkel after losing key election in North-Rhine Westphalia in 2012

- Once considered unlikely winner, he has upped his chances with energetic digital campaign aimed at women and younger voters, attracted to his message of renewal