Aleksandra Kruk

Uniwersytet Zielonogórski

FDP's election defeat in 2013 – reasons and consequences[*]

After the reunification of Germany and inclusion of the former German Democratic Republic states into the Republic of Germany some social changes occurred which influenced the way people received German political parties. The party system became fragmented and characterised by similarities in program. Because of swift changes in the quality of life and employment circumstances the traditional identification of political parties with their groups of interests ceased to be trustworthy, the social democrats lost their support among workers and it was no longer believed that the Free Democratic Party will be supported by the middle class. The result of a spreading general criticism of political parties was the term *Parteienverdrossenheit* which expressed a lack of trust and disapproval of the works of political parties by the Germans[1].

In the Parliament election on 22 September 2013 the CDU/CSU coalition received 41.6% of votes; SPD – 25.7%; FDP – 4.8%; the Coalition 90/Green – 8.6%; the Left (die Linke) – 8.6; and the Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland) – 4.7%. How did it come to this that the Free Democratic

---

[*] Tłumaczenie na język angielski Tomasz Stephan.

[1] F. Decker, *Parteien und Parteiensysteme in Deutschland*, Stuttgart 2011, s. 17; M. Zawilska-Florczuk, *Zmiany na niemieckiej scenie partyjnej po 2009 roku*, [w:] A. Kruk, M. Sus, *Niemiecka scena polityczna 2009–2013. Aktorzy, zagadnienia i wyzwania*, Wrocław 2013, s. 23–30; A. Kruk, *Przeobrażenia niemieckiej sceny partyjnej – sposoby przełamywania impasu na przykładzie Wolnej Partii Demokratycznej*, [w:] A. Pacześniak, M. Wincławska, *Partie polityczne w Polsce i w Europie. Struktury, funkcje, strategie w zmieniającym się otoczeniu*, Wrocław–Toruń 2013, s. 69–71; K. Malinowski, *System partyjny i zachowania wyborcze w zjednoczonych Niemczech*, [w:] L. Janicki, B. Koszel, W. Wilczyński, *Zjednoczenie Niemiec. Studia politologiczno-ekonomiczno-prawne*, Poznań 1996, s. 149.

Party did not reach the 5% threshold to get into the Parliament and was thus reduced to the opposition outside the Bundestag? Can this election defeat from 2013 be explained exclusively by the term *Parteienverdrossenheit* and the crash of the "hyper stability" based on the system of two parties: one dominant and one weak, where FDP has always been present in the German party system[2]? Karl-Rudolf Korte – a renowned scientist researching German parties explained: "people moved away from FDP because it was no longer trustworthy. When the program and people start matching again, people will vote for the liberals again"[3]. Marta Zawilska-Florczuk identified the FDP crisis in their unkept election promises (especially those concerning lowering tax thresholds), which were not due to unwillingness to act, but to the general economic situation in the days of the Eurozone crisis[4].

Jürgen Dittberner[5], a retired professor of the University of Potsdam on the other hand, published a book in 2014 where he pronounced the end of the "German party state era" in 2013[6]. The concept of a party state (*Parteienstaat*) has a long tradition reaching the Weimar Republic and has been defined as a state where political parties are so tightly connected with the country itself, that in situations of utmost importance for the state, it's behaviour and will is always one with the behaviour and will of the party[7]. Dittberner's forecast about the end of the German party state was a reflection of the problems faced by all German political parties which were deeply connected to the history of the German parliament, such as the general social parties and FDP. Dittberner did not determine in his book however, if the defeat of 2013 should be treated as the end or a chance to return to the Bundestag by the FDP,

---

[2] P. Kubiak, *System partyjny i partie polityczne zjednoczonych Niemiec (1990–2013)*, Poznań 2014, s. 68, 282.

[3] K.R. Korte, „*Eine Nische für die FDP ist da*", http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/liberale-ei-ne-nische-fuer-die-fdp-ist-da.694.de.html?dram:article_id=307948 (dostęp: 30.10.2015).

[4] M. Zawilska-Florczuk, *dz. cyt.*, s. 33.

[5] J. Dittberner belongs to a group of scientists researching the Free Democratic Party in the Republic of Germany. He published many books and articles on FDP. Compare: J. Dittberner , *Die F. D. P. an der Schwelle zum neuen Jahrhundert*, „Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte" 2000, nr B5; J. Dittberner, *Die FDP. Geschichte, Personen, Organisation, Perspektiven. Eine Einführung*, Wiesbaden 2005; J. Dittberner, *Die FDP: Von der Regierung in die außenparlamentarische Opposition und zurück?*, Berlin 2014; J. Dittberner, *Die FDP zwischen Neo- und Ordoliberalismus*, „Vorgänge" 2010, nr 1; J. Dittberner, *Sozialer Liberalismus. Ein Plädoyer*, Berlin 2008.

[6] J. Dittberner, *Die FDP. Von der Regierung...*

[7] T. Nowak, *Partie polityczne w Niemczech: ogólna charakterystyka*, [w:] K.A. Wojtasz-czyk (red.), *Partie polityczne w Niemczech*, Warszawa 2004, s. 18.

but he was nearer to the opinion, that FDP will fail again. In four chapters the professor summed up problems and actions of the liberals up-to-date. According to Dittberner, the lack of popularity for the liberal views among Germans, decreasing numbers of traditional and stable FDP supporters, the absence of social clients, leadership issues and a critical stance of German media towards the FDP as well as being excluded from the Bundestag in the years 2013–2017 work against it[8]. Piotr Madajczyk shares his view concerning a critical approach of the German media towards FDP when he presented critical articles about the FDP's leaders in the "Spiegel" magazine[9].

Until recently the meaning of this party in the German party system resulted from the fact it was tipping the balance in favour of either CDU/CSU or SPD, from their distinct political program with the support of the free market as a high priority, and also from that – often criticised – image of a party quickly switching its political alliances. From 1949 until 2013 the FDP has always had its representatives in the Bundestag and has always been a member of the government apart from the two specific instances, where the so-called great coalition (CDU/CSU with SPD)ruled: 1966 until 1969 and 2005 until 2009. The liberals co-governed with the Christian Democrats in the years 1949 until 1966 and 1982 until 1998; and from 1969 until 1982 they formed a government coalition with SPD. In its role as the weak but essential partner to create a government coalition, they took up the role of the correcting party (*Korrektivpartei*). When cooperating with the SPD they made sure that the governing coalition program did not go too far towards a social character. But that determination in the struggle for power has often been criticised and the FDP was often called the swinger party (*Umfallerpartei*). The political decision of the party's leadership to switch their coalition partner in 1982 in order to remain in the government, was criticised not only by supporters of the SPD but also by liberals. As a result some politicians left the FDP: for example Günther Verheugen, who changed parties after the liberals exited the coalition with the social democrats in order to cooperate with Christian Democrats. Despite all this there has not been a more effective duo in the 1980's Germany as were Helmut Kohl and H.-D. Genscher. It was their cooperation that resulted in an extraordinary achievement in the international politics which was the reunification of Germany[10].

---

[8]   J. Dittberner, *Die FDP. Von der Regierung…*, s. 134–135.

[9]   P. Madajczyk, *Kryzys FDP czy kryzys liberalizmu w Niemczech*?, „Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna" 2012, nr 1, s. 101.

[10] F. Walter, *Gelb oder Grün? Kleine Paarteiengeschichte der besserverdienenden Mitte in Deutschland*, Bielefeld 2010, s. 35. „*Profil hinter dickem Milchglas*", 18.01.1980, http://

The FDP comes from the tradition of German liberalism which bloomed in the 19th century when the ideas of renaissance and it's values were supported by the elites. The supporters of liberalism were educated people often coming from the rich bourgeoisie and the liberals were perceived in the society as the party of "the better earning" (rich middle class)[11]. Representatives of this political approach which was competing with the conservatives and socialists were: Friedrich Naumann and Gustav Stresemann who influenced the German political parties after World War I. After World War I Naumann led the left-liberal fraction and Stresemann – the national-liberal[12]. In 1933 the liberal parties were banned in Germany and the FDP was founded as late as 1949 in western Germany. At that time Theodor Heuss enjoyed social prestige among German political leaders, next to Konrad Adenauer. He participated in creating the constitution and was the first President of Western Germany. Despite the fact that in the German political system the role of the president is more representative and it is the head of the government (the chancellor) who sets the goals of the internal and foreign policy, the fact that T. Heuss took the post of the President had a positive influence on the image of the liberals. They became the third force after the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats among German parties. The FDP got into the Bundestag and in the beginning it was the party that tipped the balance, which allowed it to join the general democratic parties – CDU/CSU or SPD – and to create the federal government in coalition with either one of them. Despite the fact that the liberals were not strong enough to run for the post of the chancellor, politicians from this party: Theodor Heuss, Thomas Dehler, Erich Mende or Walter Scheel, enjoyed a broad support and worked towards the party's good results in elections. The party's trump in the post-war era were most definitely it's charismatic leaders, receiving positive notes for their views and political style[13].

---

www.zeit.de/1980/04/profil-hinter-dickem-milchglas (dostęp: 30.10.2015); H. Rudolph, *Umfallerpartei FDP? Eine Partei eigener Art. Warum die Liberalen so sind, wie sie sind*, 24.09.1982, http://www.zeit.de/1982/39/eine-partei-eigener-art (dostęp: 30.10.2015); K. Kamińska, *Partie piwotalne w Niemieckiej Republice Federalnej*, „Gdańskie Studia Międzynarodowe" 2010, nr 1/2, s. 184.

[11] F. Walter, *Gelb oder Grün? Kleine Parteiengeschichte der besserverdienenden Mitte in Deutschland*, Bielefeld 2010.

[12] P. Kubiak, *Liberalizm niemiecki w czasach Republiki Weimarskiej: ugrupowania liberalne w systemie politycznym Niemiec 1918–1933* (typescript of the Ph.D. thesis), Poznań 2006; W. Zieliński, *Wolna Partia Demokratyczna – FDP*, [w:] K.A. Wojtaszczyk (red.), *dz. cyt.*, s.114

[13] H. Vorländer, *Der Dilemma der FDP*, „Neue Gesellschaft. Frankfurter Hefte" 2011, nr 6, s. 31; P. Madajczyk, *dz. cyt.*, s. 94–95.

A coalition between the FDP and SPD was possible in 1969 due to shared visions of the international policy. Both parties wanted to have better relationships with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The FDP supported modernisation and implementing law and order in the 1960's and 70's and this was its advantage. Hans-Dietrich Genscher's leadership of the Foreign Office from 1974–1992 was given historic significance. His work style in the international policy with the main goal being the reunification of Germany in an integrated Europe was given term "genscherism" and provoked comparisons with gaullism and thatcherism. The leadership character him to remain not only at the helm of the German diplomacy, but also that of the FDP. Genscher was viewed as an effective tactician who does not want to give up power rather than an ideologist of the party. Karl-Hermann Flach, Werner Maihofer, Ralf Dahrendorf and later Otto Graf Lambsdorff played greater part in creating the program of the party[14].

In the 1980s the Green party entered the Bundestag and gradually diminished the liberals' position. A new, distinguishable group showed up as competition and its leader Joschka Fischer gained society's support. The number of political parties in the stabile German party system began to rise. Program differences between the liberals and the Green party were not distinguishable, which allowed the Green party to take over the votes of the liberal voters. It is noteworthy that it was H-D. Genscher who strove for taking action towards environmental protection in Europe: among others the cooperation of countries from the Donau basin. Another high priority of the FDP, the support of a free market was convergent with the program line of the German Christian Democrats. Thus the FDP was being accused of a "lack of political profile", as described by another researcher of the German liberalism – Hans Vorländer. He came up with an interesting concept describing FDP's situation after the reunification of Germany distinguishing three phases in creating the FDP's image in the 90's. He called the last decade of the 20th century in the history of FDP a time from "euphoria to the cave of despair" and talked about the following: a) "the fight of the Diadochi in the Babylonian prison" (1990–1994); b) an ineffective image nurturing 1994–1998 and c) the election success in 1998[15].

---

[14] A. Kruk, *Rola i miejsce Hansa-Dietricha Genschera w polityce wewnętrznej i zagranicznej Republiki Federalnej Niemiec w latach 1969–1992*, Katowice 2010.

[15] H. Vorländer, *Die FDP im vereinten Deutschland*, [w:] W. Woyke (red.), *Parteien und Parteiensystem in Deutschland*, Schwalbach 2002, s. 48; H. Vorländer, *Die FDP nach der deutschen Vereinigung*, „Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte", 1992, nr 5; H. Vorländer, *Das strategische Dilemma der FDP*, [w:] M. Machning, J. Rarschke (red.), *Wohin*

Undoubtedly, the reunification of Germany was a success for the FDP. The party gained as much as 11% of votes in the election on 2 December 1990 and received 79 seats for their representatives in the parliament[16]. Another success was an increase in the number of party members[17]. The liberals profited from the popularity of Genscher and a renowned German political scientist Arnulf Baring, in his work titled *Will the Germans make it? A farewell to illusions* saw the liberals as the only party that could fulfill the tasks which resulted from the internal process of reunification of both German states. An advantage of the FDP, according to Baring, was their support of individualism and economic minimalism[18].

The most obvious area of activity of the liberals was the international politics but after the resignation of Genscher from the posts of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice Chancellor his successors could not gain political prestige matching that of their mentor. Klaus Kinkel, the successor of Genscher in the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, lacked the charisma and that in turn made it impossible for the liberals to be a strong coalition partner in Kohl's cabinet. He was perceived as a conscientious fulfiller of tasks given by his principal but, on the other hand, he was criticised for lack of leadership qualities and lack of "colour". What's more, Kinkel took over from Genscher in a very unfavourable situation because his mentor left the politics in an atmosphere of criticism for starting a bloody Balkan conflict and lack of vision after achieving his political career's no. 1 priority goal which was the reunification of Germany.

Another issue was the discouragement of the society to carry the weight of the reunification of Germany. The voters did not want to support the Christian democrats and liberals who were talking about sacrifices. Statements of Otto Graf Lambsdorff, the Minister of Economy appointed by FDP, that Germans should carry the burden of transformation were greeted with objections. The motto of support for the liberal market, articulated in the "Lambsdorff Document", a motto which is so important for the FDP's

---

steuert Deutschland? Bundestagswahl 2009. Ein Blick hinter Kulissen, Hamburg 2009; H. Vorländer, *Die Schattenpartei. Mit Erfolg aus dem Scheinwerferlichkeit verschwunden: Die FDP*, [w:] H. Zehetmeier, *Das deutsche Parteiensystem. Perspektiven für das 21. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 2004

[16] Tamże; P. Kubiak, *dz. cyt.*, s. 279.

[17] In 1982 the number of FDP members was 73 952, in 1990 – 178 625; in 2000 – 62 721 and in 2012 – 60 181. *Freie Demokratische Partei*, [w:] F. Decker, V. Neu (red.), *Handbuch der deutschen Parteien 2013*, Bonn 2013, s. 270.

[18] A. Baring, *Czy Niemcom się uda? Pożegnanie złudzeń*, Wrocław 2000, s. 255–260.

program, did not find applause. The voters became tired of the Christian Democrats and liberals coalition and, after a wave of enthusiasm caused by the reunification of Germany, began to criticise the government for the cost of the transformation. Apart from that, Germany's reunification increased the meaning of the left-wing PDS party among German political parties. In 1993 the FDP lost its meaning in the local parliaments and the election "super year" in 1994[19] brought its defeat in the European Parliament elections[20].

These changes were caused not only by the transformations in the internal politics but also on the international stage, where the ongoing globalisation brought the changes in the structure of the German family and the German labour market. The traditional image of the German political parties evolved – as demonstrated by the attempts of finding a modern economy solutions by the German social democrats in the so called "third way in economy". The FDP began to fight for the support of voters by attempting to change the image of a party of one topic which was lowering taxes and began to create a profile of a party for the whole nation.

As a result of the election in 1998 the FDP lost the capability to be a part of the federal government for 11 years[21]. According to Thore Barfuss it was the beginning of failures and diminishing the party's prestige which could not be overcome after 2009 when the FDP got an amazing result in elections (14.6% of votes) and entered the government of Angela Merkel receiving the posts of Vice Chancellor and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Guido Westerwelle, Ministry of Health for Philip Rösler, the Justice Ministry for Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, the Ministry of Economy and Technology for Rainer Brüderle and the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development for Dirk Niebel[22]. The Free Democratic Party which was a part of opposition from 1998 until 2009 tried to gain the support of voters by presenting itself as a group supporting the idea of a civic society, liberal free market economy

---

[19] The aim of this term is to stress, that in 1994 the Germans went to the voting booths many times, because there were 19 different types of elections in whole Germany. A similar situation occured in 2009. More: A. Kruk, *Wybory w Niemczech w 2009 roku. Program i profil polityczny II rządu Angeli Merkel. Zarys informacyjny*, [in:] L. Meissner, M. Wilk, *Polska i Niemcy w Europie. Przyczynki z dziedziny kultury, polityki i historii współczesnej*, Łódź 2011, s. 218.

[20] A. Kruk, *Wolna Partia Demokratyczna (FDP) w Parlamencie Europejskim*, „Rocznik Integracji Europejskiej" 2009, nr 3, s. 356.

[21] H. Vorländer, *Die Schattenpartei…*, s. 164.

[22] T. Barfuss, *Fatale Sehnsüchte*, 25.09.2013, http://www.theeuropean.de/thore-barfuss/7473-die-gruende-fuer-die-niederlage-der-fdp (dostęp: 30.10.2015).

and the deepening and broadening of the European integration. In 1997 the party declared in Wiesbaden thesis for the liberal civic society which were another important program concept next to the Freiburg Thesis and Keulen Thesis from 1977. In supporting creativity, competitiveness and criticism they saw a chance for the society to open for innovative ideas. This was an evolution of the old German party system's architecture. Support for the civic society was a reaction to the increasing discouragement towards the political parties observed among Germans.

The election in 2002 was a breakthrough in the German party system because neither of the general social parties reached 40% of support which had always been the case before[23]. The liberals decided to use the experience gathered in their traditional backwoods such as North-Rhine Westfalia where, thanks to an effective campaign, they gained support. Guido Westerwelle fought for support by criticising the general social parties. The position of the liberals was also impaired – they faced accusations of populism, their election programme from 2002, which was based on presenting itself as an "entertainment party", instilled doubt. The FDP's leader Guido Westerwelle did not shy from using populist means in his election campaign seeking more support, and he even participated in the reality TV show Big Brother. This was detrimental to his image of a politician active both in his work on the party program and in his efforts to strengthen his leadership within the party. Westerwelle presented his views in books, where he called for changes on the German political stage. Before the election of 1998 he published *Neuland. Einstieg in einen Politikwechsel* and in 2002 *18. Mein Buch zur Wahl*[24]. On 27 October 2009 the FDP had a great success by gaining 14.6% support. Their result in western Germany was much higher than that in eastern part of the country (15.5% to 10.6%)[25]. Thanks to that result the FDP had the opportunity to form the government cabinet under leadership of Angela Merkel. When Guido Westerwelle received the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, however, he began losing support of the general public as a result of his statements and actions. His leadership style – authoritarian and focused on building a party which was a "one man show" – was good enough to gain power but not to maintain the support of the German voters. His criticism of

[23] K. Bachmann, P. Buras, S. Płóciennik, *Republika bez gorsetu. Niemcy po wyborach 2005*, Wrocław 2005.

[24] G. Westerwelle, *Neuland. Einstieg in einen Politikwechsel*, München–Düsseldorf 1998; G. Westerwelle (red.), *18. Mein Buch zur Wahl*, München 2002.

[25] *Freie Demokratische Partei*, [w:] F. Decker, V. Neu (red.), *dz. cyt.*, s. 274.

consumption at a time of deep economic crisis in the European Union was unacceptable for many Germans. His support for the idea of European integration was associated with old ideas and solutions rather than with a new and creative plan for foreign policy. Old and proven allies were alienated by the German diplomacy position towards the conflict in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Withholding from the vote in the Security Council on airstrikes in Libya was a test for the French-German alliance, which was formed in the Elysee Treaty from 1963. Taking Brazil or Russia side cast doubt on the priorities of the German diplomacy and instilled fear that traditional alliances will be replaced by new ones.

The voters got the impression that the FDP got out of the habit of governing and lost the ability to work in coalition and Westerwelle was criticised more and more and blamed over the defeat of the liberals in state parliament elections in Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Palatinate in 2011. As a consequence, Westerwelle was deprived of FDP's leadership. During the convent in Rostock in May 2011 Philipp Rösler received 95.1% of the votes and took the chairman position. Westerwelle kept the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but was deprived of the Vice Chancellor position. Three people: Philipp Rösler, Christian Lindner and Daniel Bahr began to gradually take over the power in the party. They were responsible for the preparation of the new program. It was consulted between 2010 and 2012 and announced in Karlsruhe in a document called *Thesis about freedom towards an open society*. The new program was founded on the ideas of the classic liberalism such as those of Wilhelm Röpke, Friedrich August von Hayek, John Locke and John Stuart Mill. The influence of the economic crisis in Europe was also present in the program. Rösler argued that the image of moderate party should be adopted and that FDP should become a party of a "compassionate liberalism"[26]. The discussion on the program reform reflected differences among the FDPs members, new fractions were formed such as the Dahrendorf circle (Nadja Hirsch, Gesine Meißner, Alexander Alvaro, Jorgo Chatzimarkakis and Christoph Giesa), Meeting Rounds at Maxwell's (Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, Christian Lindner, Daniel Bahr, Max Stadler, Michael Kauch and Miriam Gruß) or The Liberal Breakthrough.

Rösler and the FDP leader in the Bundestag, Reiner Brüderle, dominated the 2013 election campaign. They represented two generations of the German FDP. The biggest advantage of Brüderle, born in 1945, was his experience,

---

[26]   P. Rösler, Ch. Lindner, *Freiheit: gefühlt-gedacht-gelebt. Liberale Beiträge zu einer Wertediskussion*, Wiesbaden 2009.

Rösler on the other hand was supposed to symbolise the willingness to change both in the party and in the country. Despite the engagement of the young FDP leaders in the election campaign in 2013, the party suffered defeat. The party's reform attempts came to late and the political rivals turned out to be too strong. The Green party took over the FDP voters but also the emergence of new groups in the German politics, such as the Pirate Party or Alternative for Germany, added to the defeat. The liberals won 4.8% of the votes in the whole country. They received merely 2.7% of votes in Eastern Germany and 5.2% in Western Germany, which shows how strong the voters in the East opposed their economic program[27].

Being outside the Bundestag is a huge loss and danger for the FDP and its representatives. They lost the stage where they could express their views. At the same time the whole party's infrastructure is at risk: should they further lose support in the next election and not go over the 5% threshold, the party will lose government subsidies. The Friedrich Naumann foundation will lose its funding source if FDP will remain outside of the parliament after the next election.

That's why as early as on 8 December 2013 during the convention summing up the election results, the FDP announced that it will fight for the voters' support in the next Parliament election. There were changes in the party's leadership during that convent. stepped down as chairman and Christian Lindner was elected for this position. In his inaugural speech he called for courage and presented a special mission for the liberals, which is to protect the liberal values in the Republic of Germany. He also praised the liberals for their cooperation with the SPD towards economic relationships with the East. He argued that historical coalition partner change, which removed Helmut Schmidt from power and gave it to Helmut Kohl, was beneficial for Germany. He emphasised that it was the liberals who took on the burden of fighting populistic ideas of "policy of pleasing" in the 1990s and warned Germans not to take improvident steps. Lindner explained that when in 2009 the liberals came back to power, they were in an extremely uncomfortable situation. They had to act in an atmosphere of economic crisis in Europe and the society opposed their realistic forecasts and calls for policy of efficiency. According to Lindner, the FDP is now the only political group on the German political stage that offers an optimistic and friendly political concept, where the human being is at the centre of the liberal ideas not the state, or any other

---

[27] P. Kubiak, *System*…, s. 282.

abstract ideas, or social classes. The new chairman of the party expressed his support to fight for policies that support individualism, tolerance and fair play rules in the society. He stated that the liberals should continue their support of the free market economy, fight against increasing the public debt by social transfers, and strive for the improvement in teaching standards and activities towards environmental protection[28].

Despite the personal changes and the new program concept, the situation of the FDP did not improve rapidly. The changes in the party did not translate into a positive result in the European Parliament election. The liberals lost over 7.6 percentage points of the support they had in 2009, which was 11%. The abolition on the 5% threshold in the European Parliament elections was to their advantage. This way they were not thrown out of the EP with their 3.4% result and Alexander Graf Lambsdorff is the FDPs representative in the liberal fraction[29].

The media, however, saw hope for the FDP not in Lindner or Lambsdorff, but in Katja Suding, an FDP activist from Hamburg. The young, educated and attractive FDP leader drew the media's attention with her innovative ideas which she used in the election campaign for the state parliament in Hamburg in 2015. The posters and TV spots of FDP were dominated by the magenta colour. The media had the impression that Suding had better Public Relations knowledge than Silvana Koch-Mehrin, the former European Parliament member of the FDP. Using her charisma, the politician from Hamburg won the voters' support for a program based on social market economy and stressed the meaning of equal chances in education. Her work bore fruit and the liberals began to regain support on 15 February 2015. They received 7.4% of the votes in the election in Hamburg and 6.6% in Bremen[30].

---

[28] *Grundsatzrede von Christian Lindner MdL Bundesvorsitzender der FDP auf dem a.o. Bundesparteitag in Berlin am 8.12.2013* (bearbeitete Mitschrift), http://www.christian-lindner.de/files/204/Grundsatzrede_ Lindner_BPT_Berlin_07.12.13.pdf (dostęp: 30.10.2015).

[29] *Europawahl 2014*, http://www.europawahl-bw.de/start_uebersicht.html (dostęp: 30.10.2015).

[30] M. Theile, *Die Trümmerfrau*, „Die Zeit" 2015, nr 2; M. Widmann, *Die Magenta-Offensive*, „Die Zeit" 2015, nr 7; *Da klingt ein wenig Neid durch*, 16.02.2015, http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/buergerschaftswahlen-2015/fdp-spitzenfrau-suding-nach-der-hamburg-wahl-da-klingt-ein-wenig-neid-durch/11379364.html (dostęp: 30.10.2015); J. Staib, *Katja Suding macht Liberale glücklich*, 15.02.2015, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/wahl-in-hamburg/erfolg-der-fdp-katja-suding-macht-liberale-gluecklich-13430796.html (dostęp: 30.10.2015).

Reasons for the defeat	Consequences of FDPs dwindling significance
Leadership crisis (lack of charisma, political scandals)	Dwindling numbers of representatives
Reunification of Germany (exhaustion of the formula in international policy)	Defeat in federal elections, state and European Parliament elections
Globalisation and the changes in the labour market and family structure	Increase in significance of other political groups
Ineffective election campaigns	Liberalism concept crisis
Weak cooperation in coalition	Issues with financing activities
Social consequence of change after 1990 and political party crisis	Loss of areas, where FDP articulated its views and governed

Conclusions

There are only a few months left of a very hard work for the liberals before the Parliament elections of 2017. Undoubtedly the fact that they are outside the Bundestag undermined the party's prestige. Despite the fact that the FDP's leaders say they learned a lesson from the defeat, it is hard to foresee the election result. The German political stage is dominated by new problems and challenges. Statements of party's representatives will be observed and judged very closely. It is hard to determine today if the liberals will overcome the leadership crisis and maintain the change momentum and optimism personified by Katja Suding. The liberals should definitely speak their opinion on important issues such as the relocation of immigrants in the European Union, the problem of liabilities and crisis in the labour market. With euro-sceptical parties gaining support in the Republic of Germany, the liberals will have a hard time winning votes if they only found their campaign on mottos of European integration and strengthening the market economy and lowering taxes. Careless statements which Guido Westerwelle failed to avoid and moral scandals of which Brüderle was accused have undermined the party's image, but they were not the last straw. The adverse economic situation in Europe and the voters' interest in new groups on the political stage contributed as well. Before the reunification of Germany, despite controversies such as the Naumann scandal or Flick scandal, the liberals managed to remain in power.

Despite growing criticism of the German liberals it is worth noting that in the past they had many achievements in the internal and international

politics. It's possible that the voters will acknowledge the diligence, commitment and enthusiasm and appreciate the newly prepared program by giving them another chance in the next election to the Bundestag.

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza przyczyn porażki Wolnej Partii Demokratycznej (FDP) w wyborach parlamentarnych w 2013 roku oraz zwrócenie uwagi na skutki obecności FDP poza Bundestagiem. Wśród głównych źródeł klęski partii wymieniono: kryzys przywództwa (krytyka za brak charyzmy, skandale polityczne); zjednoczenie Niemiec (wyczerpanie formuły w polityce międzynarodowej i społeczne następstwa zjednoczenia, w tym krytykę partii politycznych); globalizację i towarzyszące jej zmiany na rynku pracy i w strukturze rodziny; nieskuteczność kampanii wyborczych oraz słabość współpracy w koalicji. Do głównych następstw klęski FDP zaliczono: kurczenie się liczby członków; porażki w wyborach federalnych, krajowych i do Parlamentu Europejskiego; wzrost znaczenia innych ugrupowań politycznych; kryzys koncepcji liberalizmu; problem z finansowaniem działalności; utratę aren, na których FDP artykułowała poglądy i sprawowała władzę.

Bibliografia

BACHMANN K., BURAS P., PŁÓCIENNIK S., *Republika bez gorsetu. Niemcy po wyborach 2005*, Wrocław 2005.

DECKER F., *Parteien und Parteiensysteme in Deutschland*, Stuttgart 2011.

DECKER F., NEU V. (red.), *Handbuch der deutschen Parteien 2013*, Bonn 2013.

DITTBERNER J., *Die FDP. Geschichte, Personen, Organisation, Perspektiven. Eine Einführung*, Wiesbaden 2005.

DITTBERNER J., *Sozialer Liberalismus. Ein Plädoyer*, Berlin 2008.

DITTBERNER J., *Die FDP: Von der Regierung in die außenparlamentarische Opposition und zurück?*, Berlin 2014.

JANICKI L., KOSZEL B., WILCZYŃSKI W., *Zjednoczenie Niemiec. Studia politologiczno-ekonomiczno-prawne*, Poznań 1996.

KAMIŃSKA K., *Partie piwotalne w Niemieckiej Republice Federalnej*, „Gdańskie Studia Międzynarodowe" 2010, nr 1–2.

KRUK A., *Rola i miejsce Hansa-Dietricha Genschera w polityce wewnętrznej i zagranicznej Republiki Federalnej Niemiec w latach 1969–1992*, Katowice 2010.

KRUK A., SUS M. (red.), *Niemiecka scena polityczna 2009–2013. Aktorzy, zagadnienia i wyzwania*, Wrocław 2013.

KUBIAK P., *System partyjny i partie polityczne zjednoczonych Niemiec (1990–2013)*, Poznań 2014.

KUBIAK P, *Liberalizm niemiecki w czasach Republiki Weimarskiej: ugrupowania liberalne w systemie politycznym Niemiec 1918–1933* (typescript of the Ph.D. thesis), Poznań 2006

MACHNING M., RARSCHKE J. (red.), *Wohin steuert Deutschland? Bundestagswahl 2009. Ein Blick hinter Kulissen*, Hamburg 2009.

MADAJCZYK P., *Kryzys FDP czy kryzys liberalizmu w Niemczech*?, „Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna” 2012, nr 1.

PACZEŚNIAK A., WINCŁAWSKA M., *Partie polityczne w Polsce i w Europie. Struktury, funkcje, strategie w zmieniającym się otoczeniu*, Wrocław–Toruń 2013.

VORLÄNDER H., *Der Dilemma der FDP*, „Neue Gesellschaft. Frankfurter Hefte” 2011, nr 6.

VORLÄNDER H., *Die FDP nach der deutschen Vereinigung*, „Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte” 1992, nr 5.

WALTER F., *Gelb oder Grün? Kleine Paarteiengeschichte der besserverdienenden Mitte in Deutschland*, Bielefeld 2010.

WESTERWELLE G., *Neuland. Einstieg in einen Politikwechsel*, München–Düsseldorf 1998.

WOJTASZCZYK K. A. (red.), *Partie polityczne w Niemczech*, Warszawa 2004.

WOYKE W. (red.), *Parteien und Parteiensystem in Deutschland*, Schwalbach 2002.

ZEHETMAIR H., *Das deutsche Parteiensystem. Perspektiven für das 21. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 2004.

www.deutschlandfunk.de
www.zeit.de
www.handelsblatt.com
www.faz.net