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## **EX-EU PARLIAMENT PRESIDENT SCHULZ TO TAKE ON MERKEL IN GERMAN ELECTIONS**

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Former European Parliament President Martin Schulz is the German Social Democrats candidate to run for chancellor against Angela Merkel.

Social Democrats (SPD) party leaders chose Schulz in an internal meeting today (24 January) in Berlin, according to German media. The choice came as a surprise to many in Brussels and Berlin following reports that Vice Chancellor and SPD chair Sigmar Gabriel would lead the party in the election, which is set to take place on 24 September.

Gabriel has battled sinking approval ratings and faced criticism over his leadership of the party, while Merkels popularity has risen, despite hostility within her centre-right CDU party over her refugee policies.

A December poll from German public broadcaster ARD showed that 57% of those surveyed said they would vote for Merkel in September, compared to 37% for Schulz and only 16% for Gabriel. Merkel announced in November that she will run for a fourth term as chancellor.

The SPD is currently in government as the junior coalition partner with Merkels CDU.

Gabriel acknowledged his low approval ratings in an interview with Stern published this afternoon. The party has to believe in the candidate and get behind him and the candidate himself has to want it with every fibre of his being. Both of those are not sufficiently the case for me, he said.

If I were to run, I'd lose and so would the SPD, Gabriel told the magazine.

### **SCHULZ WANTS BOOSTED ROLE FOR MEPS IN BREXIT TALKS**

Outgoing European Parliament President Martin Schulz demanded yesterday (14 December) that the role for MEPS in the Brexit negotiations be beefed up, threatening to reject any resulting deal.

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Schulzs two-and-a-half-year term as European Parliament president ended last week, when MEPS elected Antonio Tajani, an Italian from the centre-right EPP group, as his successor. During his tenure as head of the Parliament, Schulz was known as an advocate for the institution to receive more powers, most recently in talks over the upcoming negotiations of the UKs divorce from the EU. He is also a close friend of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, with whom critics said he formed cosy backroom deals at the expense of his partys interests.

## SCHULZ TO GIVE UP EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT FOR GERMAN POLITICS

Martin Schulz will announce this morning (24 November) that he is giving up his bid to serve another term as European Parliament president and will instead campaign for a seat in the German Bundestag in next years elections.

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Schulz has been an MEP since 1994 and previously owned a bookstore in Würselen, a town near Aachen, Germany.

He has been tight-lipped when asked about his political ambitions after leaving his post as Parliament president. In an interview this spring, Schulz said, I achieved in my political life more than I ever dreamed, when asked if he wanted to replace Merkel.

Schulz announced in November that he would give up his seat in the European Parliament and run for a spot in Germanys Bundestag. His name was circulated at that time as both a possible chancellor candidate and potential foreign minister. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the current foreign minister, has been tipped to next month become Germanys president, a largely ceremonial role.

At the World Economic Forum in the Swiss resort of Davos last week, Schulz sparred with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, warning the liberal politician to be very prudent and refrain from bossing around other EU countries on economic policy.

## RUTTE AND SCHULZ TAKE THE GLOVES OFF IN FRONT OF DAVOS ELITE

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and former European Parliament President Martin Schulz clashed over the strategy to relaunch the Union, illustrating the deep division at Europes helm in front of the global audience of the World Economic Forum.

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