

GERMAN VOTERS EXPECT CDU/CSU VICTORY IN SEPTEMBER

Five months before national elections, an opinion poll published last Friday showed a shift in opinion among German voters with respondents now saying they believe SPD candidate Gerhard SCHRÖDER will be defeated by CDU/CSU candidate Edmund STOIBER.

The Social Democrats have been suffering in opinion polls as a result of a weak economy and high unemployment. The vote in last elections in Sachsen-Anhalt gave a clear victory to CSU and pushed the SPD from a ruling party into third place behind the former communists.

Bavarian Premier Edmund Stoiber gained two percentage points to an approval rating of 42 percent, while Schröder's rating shed three percentage points.

A majority of the potential voters expect the opposition Christian Democrats and their Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union, will gain to nominate the next chancellor.

The joint election programme of the CDU/CSU was due to be published today, but has been postponed until next Monday as a mark of respect for the victims of the school shooting last Friday in Erfurt, eastern Germany, in which 17 people die.