

The Political Parties

Page 1

In the Bundestag, the German Parliament, the following parties are represented:

CDU/CSU

The CDU, the Christian Democratic Union, was founded in 1945. In Germany in 2007 the CDU had 600,000 members. In October of 1990 the West German CDU and the East German CDU merged. The CDU does not exist in the state of Bavaria. Its sister party, with which it is allied, is called the CSU – the Christian Social Union (166,000 members). In the Bundestag the two sister parties form one joint parliamentary CDU/CSU block.

SPD

The tradition of another political party, the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) goes back to the 19th century. The SPD is a re-creation of the former mainly labor-oriented party of the same name which the Hitler regime outlawed in 1933. In 2007 the SPD in Germany had 554,297 members. In September of 1990 the East and West branches of the party merged.

FDP

The FDP (the Free Democratic Party) was founded after 1945. It has 65,000 members (2007).

Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Alliance 90/The Greens)

Was formed when Bündnis 90, an eastern German grassroots movement, merged with The Greens, a western German party. The Greens evolved from citizens' initiatives and the environmental movement; they formally established themselves as a party in 1980. As of 2007, the Greens numbered 45,000 members.

Die Linke (The Left)

On June 17, 2005, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and the Electoral Alternative for Labor and Social Justice (WASG) party merged to create the Left Party (Die Linke). The PDS became the legal successor to East Germany's Socialist Unity Party (SED) in 1990. While support for the PDS/Die Linke has always been modest in the former West German states, the party still enjoys success in the former East German states where unemployment is often high. As of 2007, the Left party has 60,388 members, 88% of which are located in the former East German states.

The Political Parties**Page 2****Political Parties Today**

Any German citizen may form a political party, as long as it follows the guideline set down in the German constitution. Altogether there are about 40 political parties or party-like organizations in Germany today.

In the first elections held in the unified country, Germany was divided into two electoral districts. For the electoral district that had been West Germany plus West Berlin, the five-percent stipulation was in effect – which is a federal and state regulation that states that a party must have at least 5 % of the vote to win a seat in parliament. In order to make the chances even for all the political parties this rule was waived for the region that had been former East Germany and East Berlin. This was true only for that one first election.

In the last few years women have become much more active in politics, not only as rank-and-file, but also in positions of leadership. In 1988 the SPD passed a 40%-women-quota, which provided that 40 % of political offices and seats in parliament should be held by women. This quota was largely reached in the area of political offices by the middle of 1990.

Political parties are financed by membership dues and from contributions, which come mainly from business. In addition the parties also receive money from the government – 0.85 € a year for the first 4 million “second votes” in a federal election, for every other vote 0.60 €, as long as they get the minimum 5 %.

There are numerous popular political movements that take place mainly outside of the political establishment. These movements usually address themselves to particular problems, of which the most important is environmental protection.

The Political Parties

Page 3

Elections for the Federal Parliament (The Bundestag)

The Bundestag is the representative body of the German people. It is completely re-elected every four years (i.e. not staggered like the U.S. congress) and currently meets in Berlin.

The representatives of the Bundestag are elected in general, free, direct, equal, and secret elections. Every citizen who is at least 18 years old is eligible to vote and may run for election to a seat in parliament.

The Federal Election of December 2, 1990, was fundamentally different from every previous election. For the first time all Germans (e.g. east and west) could participate in a federal parliamentary election.

Previously Germany was divided into 248 electoral districts, but now it has 328 electoral districts.

Each voter has two votes in the Bundestag election. The first vote is cast for a specific candidate (for his electoral district). The winner of a plurality of these votes represents that electoral district in the Bundestag. The second vote is cast for a party. A list of candidates for this vote is drawn up by each party in each federal state: the state party list, which may contain some 10–30 names of leading politicians, listed according to their influence in the party. The total number of seats each party receives in the Bundestag is determined by its total nationwide share of the second votes. Once the seats won by individual candidates in the first votes have been filled, the remainder of a party's allotment is filled from its state party lists, starting at the top.

Nearly half of the 614 members of the Bundestag are elected from the first vote and thus directly elected from the electoral district, and half are appointed from a party's state party list, the number of seats a party gets depending on its percentage of "second" votes.

Only parties that command at least 5% of the "second" votes or hold three direct mandates in the Federal Territory (seats won through the "first votes") can be represented proportionally by vote in the Bundestag. This 5% clause was introduced to prevent splinter groups from entering parliament and rendering it unable to function, as they had during the Weimar Republic era in the 1920s.

Parties may form coalitions and draw up a joint list of candidates.

Voting in the election is voluntary. Similar to previous elections, nearly 78% of eligible Germans voted for the 16th German Bundestag on Sunday, September 18, 2005. The election had the following results:

2005: Percentage of Votes

Party	Total
CDU/CSU:	35.2%
SPD:	34.2%
FDP:	9.8%
Die Linke:	8.7%
Alliance 90/The Greens:	8.1%

This resulted the following allotment of seats in the Bundestag:		
	2002	2005
CDU/CSU:	248	226
SPD:	251	222
FDP:	47	61
PDS/Die Linke:	2	54
Alliance 90/The Greens:	55	51
Total Seats:	532	614

In addition to the Bundestag there are state parliaments and local assemblies.

These elections are run basically like the federal elections, but the voters for the most part cast only one vote (i.e. no "second vote" for a party).

The government gives the political parties 0.85 € for each of the "second votes" it receives in a federal election.

This reduces the political influence of campaign contributions.

Transparency 19 shows the ballot for the 252nd elector district (Würzburg) for the September 18, 2005 election.