

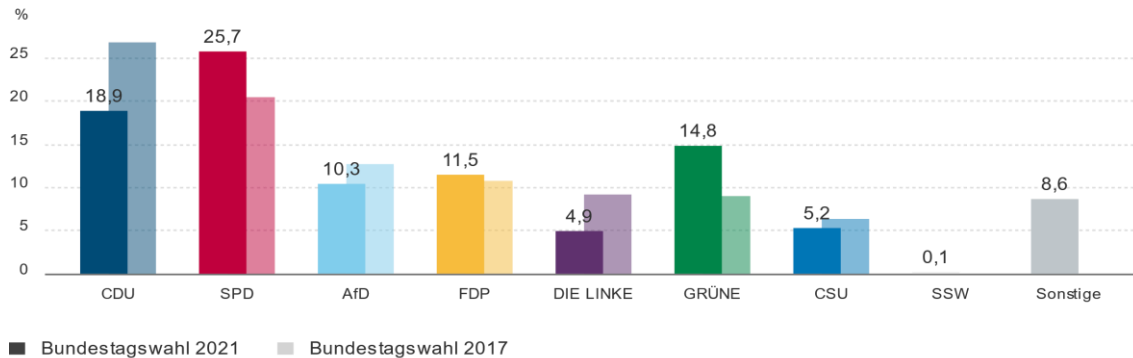


Report on the *Bundestagswahl* in Germany

With the end of Angela Merkel's chancellorship a major change in German politics is to be expected. Sixteen years as the most prominent figure in German politics, the majority of the German youth has never known anyone else than her and the others can barely remember. To understand the developments of the election and its meaning, here a summary will be given on the election results, the events leading up to the vote and the reactions of other EU member states.

Zweitstimmenanteile

Bundestagswahl 2021, Deutschland
Vorläufiges Ergebnis



■ Bundestagswahl 2021 ■ Bundestagswahl 2017

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Figure 1: Distribution of Secondary Vote of the German Election (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2021)

Figure 1 shows the achieved vote shares of the different parties in Germany. The shadow behind this year's results are the vote shares of the last election in 2017. It has to be noted that CDU and CSU are counted as one party, since they are building a Union and consequently their shares must be added up in order to gain their full share. All these parties, apart from "Sonstige" which can be translated to "Others" and therefore is not a party, but the collection of all the other parties, will be part of the next Bundestag. Hereby two cases are especially interesting. DIE LINKE, considered to be Germany's most left-wing representative in the Bundestag, dropped below the 5% mark, which would mean they would not be part of the new Bundestag if they wouldn't have been saved by achieving three direct mandates through the primary vote. Also, the SSW (*Südschleswigsche Wählerverband*) got one seat in the parliament despite only having a vote share of 0.1%, which also means that they haven't gone over the 5% hurdle. But they are the party of the Danish and National *Friesen* Minority and for national minority parties there are special rules (dpa, 2021).

Apart from that the Union of CDU and CSU can be seen as a loser of this vote since their vote share sank significantly. On the other hand, Grüne, considered to be Germany's Green party, and SPD could remark gains. Especially the SPD can be seen as a surprise here, since half a year ago they were not seen as a contender for becoming the biggest party in Germany anymore. The Grünen went the other way round and were considered to be capable of becoming the biggest party this time, but ended up at around 15%, which is still their highest result of all time. Another interesting development is that the FDP, Germany's Liberals, had the highest share in votes for first time voters (Ehmann & Venohr, 2021).

At this point in time the most likely coalitions of the future government are the *Ampel* ('Traffic Lights') consisting of SPD, Grüne and FDP or *Jamaika* ('Jamaica') consisting of CDU/CSU, Grüne and FDP. The terms *Ampel* and *Jamaika* being a reference to the involved party's colours.

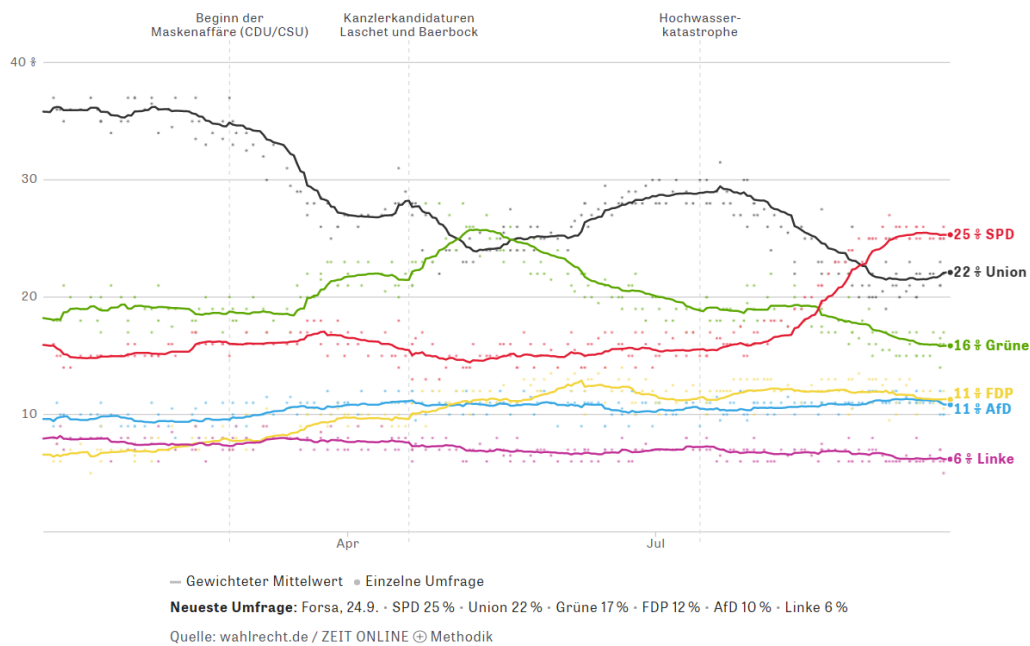


Figure 2: Election Forecast (Endt et al., 2021)

As already mentioned in the case of the Grüne, expectations of the composition of the Bundestag have changed a lot over time. In Figure 2 we can see the history of the predicted vote shares. The timeline starts in January and ends with the last survey on the 24th of September. Three special markers are given, which are, from left to right, the start of the 'Mask Affair', which involved several members of the CDU/CSU, who supposedly personally benefited from Corona Mask purchases by the government. Secondly the announcement of candidacy for the chancellorship of Baerbock (Grüne) and Laschet (CDU/CSU). And finally, the flood disaster in Germany. All these sign important events of the campaign before the election and should therefore be mentioned here. Also, they raise questions like "Why did the Grüne not benefit from a flood disaster, which could be framed as a result of climate change?" or "How does it come that apparently CDU/CSU voters switched to the Grüne around May?"

The views of EU member states

Austria

Austria's reaction to the Bundestagswahl mostly focused on European issues. News media mostly concentrated on the potential instability of German leadership in the EU caused by lengthy coalition talks as well as the needed time of growing into the former position (Kotynek, 2021; Seinitz, 2021). Further than this the policies of European debt are of high interest. Kurz already announced that if the new German government would adopt a policy of communitization of debt he would go into opposition (RND, 2021).

France

France's major focus were topics regarding the French presidency of the European Council, defense and environmental policies. France will be taking over the presidency of the European Council in January 2022. If Scholz is elected chancellor, he would be more prone towards loosening the links of spending in favor of common European expenditure and therefore supporting the presidency of France. Regarding defensive matters, Laschet would have been preferred since the CDU/CSU under Merkel shifted towards an engagement in the Sahel area. The SPD would probably be more reluctant

towards combating terrorism in this area, especially since the withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan. Regarding environmental issues, Germany is seen as lackluster independent of the possible new government (Bourdoiseau, 2021a, 2021b; Claudon, 2021; Collomp, 2021; Grésillon, 2021; Jérôme et al., 2021; Lasserre, 2021).

Hungary

Hungary had three major stakes in the German election, namely economic and ideological issues as well as issues in foreign affairs. The Hungarian economy is highly dependent on the German economy, especially the car industry. Many German car companies have their production facilities here and thus a large workforce. The Grünen would potentially change policies for the car industry in a way that would negatively affect Hungary. At the same time a coalition of Grüne and SPD would like to implement a higher minimum wage in Germany, which on the other hand would benefit the Hungarian Industry, since potentially more jobs would be outsourced to Hungary. At the same time a rather left-wing coalition would also be more inclined to treat Orban, the prime minister, more strictly, due to greater ideological differences than beforehand (Sztójcsev., 2021).

Government-sponsored outlets concluded that CDU/CSU shifted towards the left beneath Merkel and therefore lost their vote share. According to their experts a Grand Coalition is most likely. They also expect a bigger ideological gap if the Grünen are part of the government, which could lead to problems in the car industry and LGBTQ+ questions. Finally if Scholz is voted to be chancellor he is expected to be a rather conservative politician within the SPD, which would continue the cooperation with Russia and China, which are important partners of Hungary (Szecsődi, 2021).

Italy

The Italian press focuses on the effects that the German elections will have on the country's financial stability. As the change in chancellorship will directly determine the European economic governance guidelines (Bastasin, 2021). It depends on the new government whether austerity measures will be put in place again, severely affecting those high-debt countries like Italy or Spain. On the other hand, an alliance with the Grünen would bring about crucial changes in the foreign relations with China and Russia, and the rise to power of the Liberals would challenge the European "financial orthodoxy" (Haski, 2021).

Lithuania

Lithuania's main concern regarding the election are defensive matters, as it is a former Soviet country, which is potentially threatened by Russia. Germany is the lead country in the Lithuanian NATO EFP (Enhanced Forward Presence) and therefore the German attitude towards the East is a major point of concern. Merkel's policies were considered as pro-Russian by some conservatives, posing a significant threat to the security of Lithuania in their opinion. Another point of concern is environmental policies, which are seen as lackluster independent of possible coalitions (BNS and Irytas.lt inf., 2021; Čekutis, 2021a, 2021b; Sudikienė, 2021; Gudienė, 2021; "Rinkėjams persigalvojus Vokietija", 2021; "Lietuvos ir Vokietijos siekis", 2021).

Spain

The change of chancellor is also a main concern in Spain. Germany enters an early stage of political fragmentation, something that is far from unfamiliar to Spain. For this, the main matter of interest is seeing how the coalitions among the majoritarian and minoritarian parties play out (Alarcón & Monzón, 2021). And although the leading political formations agree for the most part on European matters, they differ on key issues regarding international economic relations and future reforms. For the current government, although some issues will divide both countries, having Scholz's social democrats and Grünen's ecologists in power is in the interests of PSOE and Unidas Podemos' government.

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