



HISTORICAL EXHIBITION PRESENTED BY THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG

The parliamentary groups in the 16th German Bundestag since October 2005

For the formation of a parliamentary group, the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag require certain requirements to be fulfilled, such as a minimum number of members and affiliation to the same political party. These conditions were most recently laid down in Rule 10(1) of the Rules of Procedure by virtue of a resolution adopted on 27 March 1969. Rule 10(1) is worded as follows:

“The parliamentary groups shall be associations of not less than five per cent of the Members of the Bundestag, and their members shall belong to the same party or to parties which, on account of similar political aims, do not compete with each other in any *Land*. Where Members of the Bundestag form such an association on grounds other than those set out in the first sentence of this paragraph, its recognition as a parliamentary group shall require the consent of the Bundestag.”

Because of this rule, the **CDU and CSU** no longer need to seek the consent of the Bundestag to form a joint parliamentary group after each general election. The two parties do not compete in any *Land*, since the CSU is confined to Bavaria, where the CDU does not put up any candidates for election. In the case of the new **Left Party parliamentary group**, this clause could become a political hot potato if the group's component elements – the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and the Electoral Alternative for Work and Social Justice (*Wahlalternative Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit – WASG*) – were to run against each other in the 2006 election to the Berlin House of Representatives.

Under the current Electoral Act (*Wahlgesetz*), the Bundestag has 598 Members. Following the elections of September 2005, there are a further **16 Members with ‘overhang mandates’**. These are created when the voters of a particular *Land*, using their first vote, directly elect more of a party's constituency candidates than the number of seats to which the party is entitled by virtue of the percentage of second votes cast in its favour. This rule ensures that parties retain all the seats that are won directly by their constituency candidates. This is why the 16th German Bundestag has a total of **614 Members**.

Since the **minimum size of a parliamentary group** corresponds to 5% of the statutory number of Members (the number prescribed by the Electoral Act plus the number of overhang mandates), **in the 16th electoral term** a parliamentary group must have at least 5% of 614 Members, which makes a minimum of **31 members**.

Accordingly, there are **five parliamentary groups** in the 16th German Bundestag:

the **CDU/CSU** parliamentary group, with 226 members,
the **SPD** parliamentary group, with 222 members,
the **FDP** parliamentary group, with 61 members,
the **Left Party** parliamentary group, with 53 members¹, and
the **Alliance 90/The Greens** parliamentary group, with 51 members.

Each parliamentary group is led by a **group chairperson**. At the start of the 16th electoral term, the groups elected the following chairpersons:

the CDU/CSU parliamentary group: **Volker Kauder**
the SPD parliamentary group: **Peter Struck**
the FDP parliamentary group: **Wolfgang Gerhardt**
the Left Party parliamentary group: **Gregor Gysi and Oskar Lafontaine**
the Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary group: **Renate Künast and Fritz Kuhn**

Bibliographical references:

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Suzanne S. Schüttemeyer, *Fraktionen im Deutschen Bundestag 1949-1997*. Opladen, 1998.

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¹ On 13 February 2006, Gert Winkelmeier, Member of the Bundestag, left the Left Party parliamentary group and is now non-attached. Thus the Left Party parliamentary group now has only 53 members instead of 54.