

## An Absolute Majority for the SPD as an Unintended Consequence? The Land Election in Rheinland-Pfalz 2006

### INTRODUCTION

On March 26, the citizens of Rheinland-Pfalz voted for a new parliament. The SPD won a large plurality (45.6 per cent) of the vote, its best result ever, while the CDU came second with only 32.8 per cent, thereby hitting an all time low. Amongst the smaller parties, only the FDP gained representation in parliament while the Greens (4.6 per cent) as well as the new leftist party WASG (2.5 per cent) could not overcome the five percent threshold. For the SPD, the plurality of the votes translated into a (bare) majority of the seats (52.5 percent), which allowed the SPD to form a government without the aid of another party.

While the result of the election was determined almost exclusively by factors on the Land level, its outcomes on the federal level were considerable. First and foremost, the election ended the string of devastating losses in Land elections for the SPD, which had started in 1999 and had contributed directly and indirectly to the erosion of the government led by Gerhard Schröder. Since the Grand Coalition formed after the federal election of 2005 was controversial with many party members and the party's already low ratings in the polls kept falling for months, this may have very well prevented a premature end of the Grand Coalition government in Berlin. Moreover, the party's impressive victory further enhanced the reputation of Kurt Beck (Ministerpräsident since 1994), who had already played a prominent role in the party on the federal level and became its chairman in April 2006. Finally, the election brought an end to the last SPD/FDP coalition on the Land level. This may be of little practical importance for the balance of power in the Bundesrat for the time being. However, since SPD/Green governments, CDU/FDP governments or (as of lately) Grand Coalitions have been the dominant patterns of coalition formation in Germany for more than two decades, both pundits and politicians had always taken a special interest in this rather unusual constellation since it was living proof that other options were still feasible.

In this paper, we start with a sketch of the general political setup in Rheinland-Pfalz and an overview of the campaign. An analysis of the result follows. We end with a brief conclusion and an assessment of the election's immediate and future consequences.

### THE SETTING: POLITICS IN A CONFESSIONALLY DIVIDED LAND

Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatinate) is a mid-sized Land in the south west of Germany with a population of just over 4 millions. Its head of Government (Ministerpräsident) is elected by the Land's parliament (Landtag). The electoral system closely resembles the federal dual-ballot system and is basically proportional. Rheinland-Pfalz was created by a decree of the French military administration in 1946 that merged former parts of Bavaria, Prussia, Hesse-Darmstadt and Hesse-Nassau with some smaller territories. Large parts of Rheinland-Pfalz are still rural, and only five of the Land's 118 towns and cities have a population of more than 100,000 inhabitants. Industrialization was confined to a few urban areas, and farming still plays a major role in the Land's economy. The largest city and capital of Rheinland-Pfalz is Mainz with slightly less than 200,000 inhabitants.

The decision to merge these heterogeneous territories resulted in a clear confessional divide: While only about one third of the population belongs to the evangelic church, parts of the north east and of the south are predominantly protestant. On the other hand, the (bare) catholic majority of the population is concentrated in the north. In the rural areas around the diocesan city of Trier, still more than 80 per cent of the population are catholic.

Because the respective conflicts between labour/capital and (catholic) church/state are the two most important amongst the cleavages which shaped the German party system,<sup>1</sup> this specific structure had an enormous political impact in the past. In the rural north –a stronghold of the catholic Zentrumspartei from the 1870s until 1933<sup>2</sup> –the CDU polled up to 75 per cent of the vote from the 1950s through the 1970s. On the other hand, for decades support for the SPD was largely confined to the few industrialized parts of the Land and the protestant areas.<sup>3</sup> Given this specific setup, it is hardly surprising that the CDU used to receive more than 40 per cent of the vote on a regular basis.

Rheinland-Pfalz started with an all party coalition, which was soon replaced by a CDU/SPD government. After the land election of 1951, a CDU/FDP coalition was formed that lasted for 20 years. In 1971, the CDU won an absolute majority of the vote for the first time and subsequently ruled without a coalition partner. Moreover, the party was able to repeat that remarkable feat in the elections of 1975, 1979, and 1983. From that time on, Rheinland-Pfalz was considered one of the Christian Democrats' heartlands, not unlike Bavaria.<sup>4</sup>

Somewhat paradoxically, this achievement was caused by a *weakening* of the denominational cleavage. Ecological regression of electoral and census data on the district level shows that the CDU managed to keep its support amongst Catholics while making inroads into the protestant camp from the late 1960s on. In 1963, slightly less than 10 per cent of the

Protestants voted for the Christian Democrats. 20 years later, this rate had almost tripled.<sup>5</sup> Without this unexpected increase in support for the Christian Democrats, the absolute majorities of the 1970s would not have been possible. While there can be no conclusive evidence in the absence of survey data, it is safe to assume that this unexpected turn of affairs was facilitated by a policy of modernization pursued by Helmut Kohl, who became chairman of the party's faction in the Landtag in 1963. In 1966, he was elected head of the party on the Land level as well and was designated to become Ministerpräsident in 1969. Kohl vastly reduced the number of (often tiny) boroughs and districts, allocated funds for the development of the Land's rural areas, and initiated the foundation of two new universities.

Even more important was the reform of primary and secondary schooling.<sup>6</sup> Though almost all schools were run by the state, the constitution of Rheinland-Pfalz stipulated that schools should generally accept either catholic or protestant pupils. Moreover, even at schools that accepted Catholics and Protestants, pupils had to be taught exclusively by teachers belonging to their respective denomination. In rural areas where most schools were very small, these provisions resulted in considerable hardships for pupils from the respective minorities, who had to commute long distances, only to be taught in large multi-age classes. The Kohl government responded to this state of affairs with an unprecedented program to build larger new schools in rural areas. Moreover, while the constitutional provisions on schooling had already been somewhat mitigated in 1964 and 1967, the CDU backed a major change to the constitution in 1970 and abandoned denominational separation in state-run schools completely.

In 1976, Kohl became leader of the CDU opposition in the Bundestag in 1976 and was replaced by Bernhard Vogel. Vogel campaigned successfully 1979 and 1983 but lost the absolute majority in 1987 and had to form a coalition with the FDP. This turn of events resulted in considerable strife within the party. In 1988, a majority of the delegates (which was led by one of Vogel's ministers) at a party conference declined Vogel another term as its head, thereby effectively forcing him to resign as Ministerpräsident as well. The resulting cleavage between 'loyalists' and 'rebels' within the party has proven extremely durable, and no leader of the CDU has managed to gain the party's unanimous support since these days.

In the election of 1991, the SPD won a plurality of the votes (44.8 per cent) for the first time and formed a coalition government with the FDP, while the CDU polled a (then) humiliating 38.7 per cent. In the election of 1996, the SPD lost about five percentage points of the vote but the CDU's share stagnated. Though a CDU/FDP coalition would have commanded a bare majority of one seat in the Landtag, the FDP decided to continue the somewhat unusual co-

operation with the SPD. Johannes Gerster, the CDU's shadow Ministerpräsident, became leader of the parliamentary faction in the Landtag but met fierce opposition within the party. In the following year, he was replaced by Christoph Böhr. Four years later, the SPD's support rebounded to 44.7 per cent of the vote, while the CDU lost another three percentage points. Massive internal strife notwithstanding, Böhr managed to keep his offices as head of the party at the Land level, head of the parliamentary group and top candidate for the election of 2006, although he was openly attacked by opponents within his party in the run-up to the campaign.

#### THE CAMPAIGN: WALTZING BEFORE A BLIND (AND BORED) AUDIENCE?

The 2006 campaign set in after the Grand Coalition had been formed in Berlin. The new political constellation at the federal level had repercussions on the campaign at the Land level. To begin with, after the 2005 federal election the approval of the incumbent Land government increased considerably: while during 2004 less than 40 percent had been satisfied with the incumbents, at the start of 2006 the rate was 60 percent.<sup>7</sup> Obviously, this implied considerably better conditions for being re-elected. Moreover, while in the years before CDU and SPD had fought many campaigns at the Land level about political issues from the federal agenda they downplayed federal issues in the 2006 campaign. As the federal Grand Coalition still enjoyed its honeymoon, both CDU and SPD postponed issues that might turn out to be controversial. As a consequence, the two major parties avoided any direct attacks. Therefore, the 2006 Rheinland-Pfalz election was certainly less of a national 'barometer election' than many prior Land elections in Germany.

The SPD fought a typical incumbent's campaign. To benefit from a feel-good factor, it highlighting its achievements and claimed that Rheinland-Pfalz was a 'climber Land' ('Aufsteigerland'). It attempted to draw the public's attention to the Land's economic performance, its relatively low rates of unemployment, and the successful conversion of former American military bases. Moreover, it pointed to enhancements in childcare and the setup of full-time schools and promised further improvements for the future. The campaign was intensely personalized. Beck was praised for political achievements and portrayed as a likeable person being in touch with ordinary citizens. Moreover, the SPD attempted to make the Land election a personal plebiscite over Ministerpräsident Beck using the catch-phrase 'The second-vote is

Beck-vote' ('Zweitstimme ist Beck-Stimme'). Thereby, the SPD aimed at benefiting from Beck's popularity.

The FDP fought a two-edged campaign. On the one hand, it campaigned for the continuation of the social-liberal coalition in Rheinland-Pfalz. Only days before the election, the party's steering committee announced that it would renew its coalition with the SPD even if a FDP/CDU government would be feasible. Such a strong commitment is highly unusual. Like the SPD the FDP highlighted its past achievements though it drew more heavily on economic issues and did not personalize its campaign as strongly. On the other hand, the FDP addressed federal issues by attacking the Grand Coalition. First and foremost, it criticized the Grand Coalition for the decision to increase the VAT by three percentage points and urged the voters to cast a kind of protest vote against the federal government.

The CDU's strategy clearly differed from the SPD's campaign. As its candidate was quite unpopular even with those voters who supported the party and somewhat controversial within the CDU, the campaign was not focused on Böhr. Rather, it attempted to benefit somewhat from the popularity of its federal leader, Angela Merkel, who enjoyed her honeymoon as federal chancellor. At the same time, it criticized the incumbents for adorning themselves with borrowed plumes by suggesting that the Land's low rates of unemployment stemmed from many citizens of Rheinland-Pfalz commuting to neighbouring Lands like Hessen. In the final stage of the campaign, the Christian Democrats changed their strategy by picking out the naturalization of immigrants as a central theme. They called for tightening measures so that immigrants could become Germans only after having attended a course, passed an exam and sworn an oath on the constitution.

The Greens that were in opposition both at the federal and the Land level addressed classical green issues as they focused on consumer protection, strategies against global warming, and renewable energies. As did other parties they dealt with education policy. At the same time, by focusing the campaign on top candidate Ise Thomas the Greens aimed more strongly at personalizing politics than they had done in previous campaigns.

Finally, the Wahlalternative Arbeit & Soziale Gerechtigkeit (WASG) ('Electoral Alternative Labour & Social Justice') was a newcomer on the Land's political stage. Union members and former Social Democrats who were dissatisfied with the welfare state reforms initiated by Gerhard Schröder ('Agenda 2010') had founded the new party (which is bound to merge with the PDS) in 2005. Its campaign focused heavily on the issue of 'social justice', thereby calling for a leftist protest vote.

Wrapping things up, the 2006 Rheinland-Pfalz campaign differed considerably from many prior campaigns at the Land level. The two major parties did not attack each other severely, and if so, they chiefly referred to Land issues. What is more, the major incumbent party fought a personalized campaign focusing on Ministerpräsident Beck. At the same time, presumably due to the lack of fierce controversy fuelled by national issues the campaign turned out to be not very exciting. Overall, the public's and even the media's interest in the election was considered unusually low.

#### THE OUTCOME: AN UNEXPECTED ABSOLUTE MAJORITY FOR THE SPD IN A FORMER STAMMLAND OF THE CDU

In the 2006 election, turnout and volatility were lower than in any prior Land election in Rheinland-Pfalz. Just 58 percent of those eligible to vote actually cast a vote. Thus, in 2006 a long-term downward trend of electoral participation continued: While until the end of the 1980s turnout approached at least almost 80 percent, starting in the 1990s it declined steadily by roughly 20 percentage points, with the eight-points-drop in 2001 being extraordinarily large. At the same time, the Pedersen index of volatility<sup>8</sup> equalled 3.6, indicating that the result of the 2006 election resembled the outcome of its 2001 predecessor quite closely. This finding is the more remarkable as in many other German Länder volatility had tremendously increased from the 1990s onward as compared to the 1970s and 1980s.

Table 1: The outcome of the 2006 and the 2001 Land elections in Rheinland-Pfalz

	2006	2001
Turnout	58.2	62.1
SPD	45.6	44.7
CDU	32.8	35.3
FDP	8.0	7.8
Greens	4.6	5.2
WASG	2.5	--
Others	6.7	6.9

Entries are vote shares of the Landesstimmen.

As pre-election surveys had indicated that a considerable majority of Rheinland-Pfalz citizens approved of the incumbent government and did not think that it was time for a change,<sup>9</sup> it comes as no surprise that the vote shares of both incumbent parties rose somewhat compared to the 2001 election. Somewhat paradoxically, the SPD gained in the strongholds of CDU, FDP and the Greens while losing ground in its own strongholds where the WASG made some inroads.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, it lost a considerable number of votes in its traditional social base, i.e. among workers and the unemployed, while it gained in other social groupings like the self-employed.<sup>11</sup> As a result, the SPD's success was accompanied by a further wearing off of the traditional social outline of its electorate.

It appears that several factors contributed to the SPD's success in the 2006 election. To begin with, it was considered the most competent party in policy domains voters considered to be important, with child care, family, and social justice among them. However, compared to the 2001 election the SPD's lead in policy terms had decreased, and in some domains including labour policy (which many voters consider the most important issue), it had actually vanished.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, Kurt Beck was much more popular with the electorate than his challenger Christoph Böhr, and his lead had increased considerably since 2001. If voters were able to vote the Ministerpräsident directly, Beck's supporters would have outnumbered Böhr's voters by more than three to one.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the SPD received more Landesstimmen (or Zweitstimmen) than Wahlkreisstimmen, though for the SPD and the CDU generally the reverse pattern is found.<sup>14</sup> As the patterns of ticket-splitting indicate, the SPD received a considerable number of second votes from citizens who voted for the CDU with the Wahlkreisstimme and also did quite well among voters who cast their Wahlkreisstimme for the FDP or the Greens.<sup>15</sup> These findings suggest that the slogan 'Zweitstimme ist Beck-Stimme' was quite effective in garnering votes.

As with turnout, the CDU's vote share continued to decrease though politicians and pundits alike thought that it had hit rock bottom in 2001 already. In 2006, the CDU received less than a third of the votes cast while it had garnered at least 45 percent from 1955 to 1987. Compared to the 2001 election, the CDU's losses were most pronounced in the party's traditional strongholds (mainly rural constituencies with high rates of Catholics). Apparently, many of its former voters abstained.<sup>16</sup> Thus, it appears that the CDU's devastating result stemmed from problems of mobilising the party's traditional electoral base for the fourth time in a row. Top

candidate Böhr presumably contributed considerably to this failure as the public considered him to be detached and therefore preferred incumbent Kurt Beck to him. Moreover, controversies within the CDU that have troubled the party for the last fifteen years may have hampered the party's mobilisation and appears to have caused the public to disapprove of the party's performance at the Land level.<sup>17</sup>

Both the Greens and the WASG did not manage to pass the five percent threshold. In the 2006 election, the Greens did worse than in any Land election since 1987. The main beneficiary of the Greens' bad performance was the SPD, which received more than half of the votes of those 2001 Green voters who refused to vote for the Greens again.<sup>18</sup> As it had received 5.6 percent in Rheinland-Pfalz in the 2005 federal election, the leftist WASG had hoped to enter the Land parliament in 2006. However, the WASG garnered only 2.5 percent of the Landesstimmen. Its failure to enter the Land parliament was presumably due to the low salience of their core issue – social justice, which is primarily in the domain of the federal government – and the SPD's success in making the election a plebiscite over the popular incumbent Ministerpräsident.

Although the SPD's plurality of the votes translated into a majority of the seats, Beck asked the FDP to enter negotiations regarding the future government. However, the FDP declined that offer immediately. On 18 May 2006, Kurt Beck was reelected as Ministerpräsident. Interestingly, he received 54 of 101 votes though the SPD held only 53 seats in the Land parliament, implying a CDU or FDP representative cast his or her vote for Beck. In his government declaration on 22 May 2006, Ministerpräsident Beck announced several policy measures, including salary cuts for recruits in the civil service, financial improvements for all-day schools, and the introduction of tuition fees for university students from outside Rheinland-Pfalz.<sup>19</sup>

Table 2: The government of Rheinland-Pfalz after the 2006 Land election

Portfolio	Incumbent
Prime Minister	Kurt Beck (SPD)
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Science, Advanced Training, Research and Culture	Prof. Dr. Jürgen Zöllner (SPD)
Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, Family,	Malu Dreyer (SPD)



and Health Care	
Minister of Education, Women and Youth	Doris Ahnen (SPD)
Minister of Finance	Ingo Deubel (SPD)
Minister of Domestic Affairs and Sports	Karl-Peter Bruch (SPD)
Minister of Justice	Heinz Georg Bamberger (SPD)
Minister of Environment, Forests, and Consumer Protection	Margit Conrad (SPD)
Minister of Economics, Traffic, Agriculture and Viniculture	Hendrik Hering (SPD)

By and large, Ministerpräsident Beck kept his cabinet and changed his government team chiefly in response to the FDP's withdrawal from the government (Table 2). To begin with, the Minister of Science, Jürgen Zöllner, became Deputy Prime Minister. Hendrik Hering, Land Secretary in the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, became Minister of Economics, while the president of the Higher Regional Court at Koblenz, Heinz Georg Bamberger, became Ministry of Justice. In addition to vacancies that had resulted from the FDP's withdrawal, Land Secretary of Finance, Ingo Deubel, became Minister of Finance. Interestingly, only four of the eight ministers are members of the Landtag, though in parliamentary systems regularly parliamentary factions are the primary source for recruiting members of the cabinet.

#### CONCLUSION

The 2006 Rheinland-Pfalz election resulted in minor changes of the parties' vote shares that in turn had considerable political consequences. For the first time since 1983, only three parties entered the Land parliament. Moreover, by increasing its vote share a little bit, the SPD attained a majority of seats in the Land parliament of Rheinland-Pfalz that for a long time had been considered a CDU Land. Somewhat paradoxically, though both incumbent parties had successfully campaigned for the continuation of the social-liberal coalition, the FDP is no longer in government. Thus, it is part of a governing coalition in only three Lands (Baden-Württemberg, Niedersachsen and Nordrhein-Westfalen) and is no longer capable of vetoing constitutional amendments in the Bundesrat. From this angle, the outcome of the Rheinland-Pfalz election implies that the Grand Coalition now has less difficulties in implementing its

policies. As regards the CDU, the Land election resulted in another reshuffle of its leadership on the Land level: Christoph Böhr resigned and Christian Baldauf became the leader of both the Land party and the CDU faction in the Land parliament. On the federal level, this new defeat is unlikely to have a large impact within the party. While it may add to the growing feeling that the CDU has to pay a very high price for the chancellorship, it came hardly as a surprise. Moreover, Böhr was neither a strong supporter of Merkel nor one of her opponents. Therefore, the delicate balance of power within the party is hardly shifted by his losses.

Its political repercussions notwithstanding, the outcome of the 2006 election by and large resembled its 2001 predecessor. Principally, it confirmed that Rheinland-Pfalz is no CDU stronghold anymore. As in every Land election since 1991, the Christian Democrats did not manage to become the strongest party. On the other hand, the SPD's victories in several subsequent elections do not imply that Rheinland-Pfalz has become a Social Democratic heartland. The SPD's 2006 success did not entirely result from durable factors but from short-term factors that may be unique to this election. To begin with, the Grand Coalition at the federal level appears to have suspended the conflict between SPD and CDU over federal issues, so that the Land campaign lived up to its name clearer than many of its predecessors. Moreover, the CDU's failure appears to have been caused by intra-party controversies and a top candidate that the public considered as being inadequate. At the same time, the SPD's outstanding result was related to its popular top candidate.

In 2011, when the next regular Land election will be held, at the federal level a different government will most likely have replaced the Grand Coalition. Thus, federal issues may play a major role in the campaign. Moreover, Böhr's successor might be more popular with the voters and might even manage to unite the CDU behind himself. Looking at the SPD, it is far from certain that Kurt Beck will run for re-election in 2011, as he might become member of the Bundestag and maybe the federal government. Even if Beck runs for re-election, he could be considerably less appealing than in 2006 as voters could regard him as chairman of the federal SPD being responsible for federal policies they do not like. If federal issues re-entered the Land campaign, some of the non-voters might also be mobilised, which could benefit the smaller parties as well. Moreover, the social structure of the Land still favours the CDU. While the Christian Democrats have not been able to mobilise their traditional constituency for quite a long time, there is no evidence of a durable realignment that would benefit the SPD. Thus, the outcome of 2006 election appears to be a snapshot that does not tell us much about the outcome of future Land elections.

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- <sup>1</sup> Pappi, Franz Urban (1973), 'Parteiensystem und Sozialstruktur in der Bundesrepublik', *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 14: 191-213.
- <sup>2</sup> Kai Arzheimer, '50 Jahre Wahlen in Rheinland-Pfalz', in: U. Sarcinelli, J.W. Falter, G. Mielke, B. Benzner (eds), *Politische Kultur in Rheinland-Pfalz*, (Mainz: v. Hase & Koehler, 2000), p. 243.
- <sup>3</sup> Arzheimer, Kai and Cornelia Weins (1997), 'Zerfallen die sozialstrukturellen Bindungen an die Union - zum Beispiel in Rheinland-Pfalz?' *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 28: 203-215.
- <sup>4</sup> Arzheimer, '50 Jahre Wahlen in Rheinland-Pfalz', p.236-241.
- <sup>5</sup> Arzheimer, '50 Jahre Wahlen in Rheinland-Pfalz', p. 249.
- <sup>6</sup> Schaaf, Erwin (1996), 'Schulpolitik, Schule und Hochschule', in: H.-G. Borck (ed), *Beiträge zu 50 Jahre Geschichte des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz*, (Koblenz: Landesarchivverwaltung), p. 315-344.
- <sup>7</sup> Cf. Infratest dimap, LänderTREND Rheinland-Pfalz März I.
- <sup>8</sup> Cf. Mogens N. Pedersen, *The Dynamics of European Party Systems: Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility*, in: *European Journal of Political Research* 7, 1979, pp. 1-26.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. Infratest dimap, LänderTREND Rheinland-Pfalz März I and Infratest dimap, LänderTREND Rheinland-Pfalz März II.
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. Statistisches Landesamt Rheinland-Pfalz, Landtagswahl Rheinland-Pfalz am 26. März 2006, Teil 1: Analyse der Wahlergebnisse in der Wahlnacht, Bad Ems: Statistisches Landesamt Rheinland-Pfalz, p. 51-57.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Viola Neu, Landtagswahlen in Baden-Württemberg, Rheinland-Pfalz und Sachsen-Anhalt am 26. März 2006, Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, p. 10.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Wahl in Rheinland-Pfalz. Eine Analyse der Landtagswahl vom 25. März 2001, Mannheim, pp. 49-53, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Landtagswahlen in Baden-Württemberg, Rheinland-Pfalz und Sachsen-Anhalt, p. 3, Neu, Landtagswahlen, p. 44.  
([http://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Ergebnisse/Wahlanalysen/News1\\_LTW06.pdf](http://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Ergebnisse/Wahlanalysen/News1_LTW06.pdf)).
- <sup>13</sup> Infratest dimap, LänderTREND Rheinland-Pfalz März II and Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Landtagswahlen in Baden-Württemberg, Rheinland-Pfalz und Sachsen-Anhalt, p. 3  
([http://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Ergebnisse/Wahlanalysen/News1\\_LTW06.pdf](http://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Ergebnisse/Wahlanalysen/News1_LTW06.pdf)).
- <sup>14</sup> This general pattern can be explained at least partially by the incentives provided by the electoral system. To the Landesstimme a system of proportional representation applies while the Wahlkreisstimme is subject to a first-past-the-post system. Therefore, smaller parties have no chance of winning the district mandate, and some supporters of small parties thus refuse to cast a Wahlkreisstimme for their preferred party and rather vote for the preferred coalition partner, i.e. the SPD or the CDU.
- <sup>15</sup> Cf. Statistisches Landesamt Rheinland-Pfalz, Landtagswahl Rheinland-Pfalz am 26. März 2006, Teil 2: Repräsentative Wahlstatistik, Bad Ems: Statistisches Landesamt Rheinland-Pfalz, p. 46.
- <sup>16</sup> Cf. Neu, pp. 15-17 and Statistisches Landesamt Rheinland-Pfalz, Landtagswahl Rheinland-Pfalz am 26. März 2006, Teil 1: Analyse der Wahlergebnisse in der Wahlnacht, Bad Ems: Statistisches Landesamt Rheinland-Pfalz, pp. 52-53.
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. Neu, p. 46.
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. Neu, pp. 15-17.
- <sup>19</sup> Cf. 'Im Auftrag der Menschen: Gemeinsam den Aufbruch gestalten'. Regierungserklärung von Ministerpräsident Kurt Beck am 30. Mai 2006.