Elections to the 17th Landtag

The 17th Landtag (state parliament) was elected on 13th March 2016 for a five-year term. The SPD gained 36.2% of the votes cast, the CDU 31.8%, the AfD 12.6%, the FDP 6.2%, Alliance 90/The Greens 5.3% and the remaining parties totalled 7.8%.

This meant that the 101 seats in the Landtag were distributed as follows: SPD 39, CDU 35, AfD 14, FDP 7 and BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN 6 seats. The Rhineland Palatinate is divided, for electoral purposes, into four districts with a total of 51 constituencies. The electoral system gives every voter in the federal state a first vote and a second vote. In the 51 constituencies the first vote (the constituency vote) is a direct vote for a specific candidate. The second vote (list vote) is for a party, so that the other 50 deputies are decided by the total number of votes received by each party.

Results for the 2016 elections to the Landtag

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Constituency votes</th>
<th>List votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>70,4</td>
<td>2,161,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>31,8</td>
<td>2,161,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AfD</td>
<td>97,4</td>
<td>2,130,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>12,6</td>
<td>132,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance 90/The Greens</td>
<td>5,3</td>
<td>70,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7,8</td>
<td>167,083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rounding-off effect means that the percentages do not in every case add up to 100%.

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The tasks of the Landtag

The Landtag has various functions, including the task of electing the state prime minister, the president of the court of auditors and the ombudsman. In addition to this elective function the Landtag also has a legislative function. That is, it must deliberate on and pass laws for the federal state.

One specific right of the Landtag is the right to adopt a budget. In doing so the deputies decide whether and in what amount funds are to be set aside for specified purposes. Of increasing importance is their role as a check on the state government, since the government is required to be accountable to them at all times.

The Landtag’s function as a public forum is of central significance. In contrast to the government and the administrative organs, the Landtag deliberates and decides in public session, thus enabling ordinary citizens to form an opinion on the matters dealt with in parliament.

The organisation of the Landtag

The primary organ of the Landtag is its meeting in plenary session, i.e. the general assembly of all 101 members, or deputies, of the Landtag. It is convened about 25 times per year.

There are also 15 specialist committees. The budget and finance committee, the economic affairs committee and the social policy committee are three examples. The committees meet in a total of around 150 sessions, as compared with the 25 plenary sessions of the Landtag.

The president of the Landtag represents the parliament in public and is responsible for the management of procedural matters, i.e. he (or she) chairs its plenary sessions. The president and two vice-presidents form the executive board whose functions include, for example, the appointment and dismissal of Landtag employees.

The parliamentary groups in the Landtag

The members of the parliament, who belong to the same party, are forming a parliamentary group. Five such parliamentary groups are represented in the present 17th legislative term: the SPD with 39 deputies, the CDU with 35, the AfD with 14, the FDP with 7 and Alliance 90/The Greens with 6 deputies.

The state constitution requires the parliamentary groups to play their part in discharging the tasks of the Landtag, in particular by coordinating the various parliamentary activities. They decide who will represent the party in which committee and may nominate candidates for elected office. In weekly meetings and working parties the members of the parliamentary groups develop and coordinate parliamentary initiatives, prepare for plenary and committee sessions and decide who will speak for the party in parliament and how it will vote. The parliamentary groups are entitled to reasonable facilities such as offices, the scope of which is determined by the act regulating parliamentary groups.
Seating plan in the 17th Rhineland Palatinate Landtag