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Election update Germany – Will the SPD succeed in catching up?

Even though the election campaign is already underway in Germany, little has changed in the polls since the break-up of the ruling coalition. The Social Democrats' race to catch up, as announced by Chancellor Scholz, is not yet evident in the data. However, a look at the past shows that it is not necessarily too late to close the gap.

Lost vote of confidence paves the way for new elections

Today, Chancellor Scholz of the Social Democrats (SPD) will officially ask the parliament for a vote of confidence, which will take place on next Monday. Should the Bundestag vote no confidence in him as expected, the way would be clear for new elections, which are planned for February 23. Federal President Steinmeier has already signaled that he will dissolve the Bundestag in this case.

Little movement in the polls

The election campaign has effectively been underway since the break-up of the traffic light coalition (SPD, the Greens and the FDP) just over a month ago. However, this has hardly caused any movement in the polls so far. The combination of Christian Democrats and their Bavarian sister party (CDU/CSU) together are still clearly in the lead, and the Liberals (FDP) and the Left Party are still threatened with failure to clear the 5% hurdle and might thus not be in the next Bundestag (Chart 1).

11 December 2024

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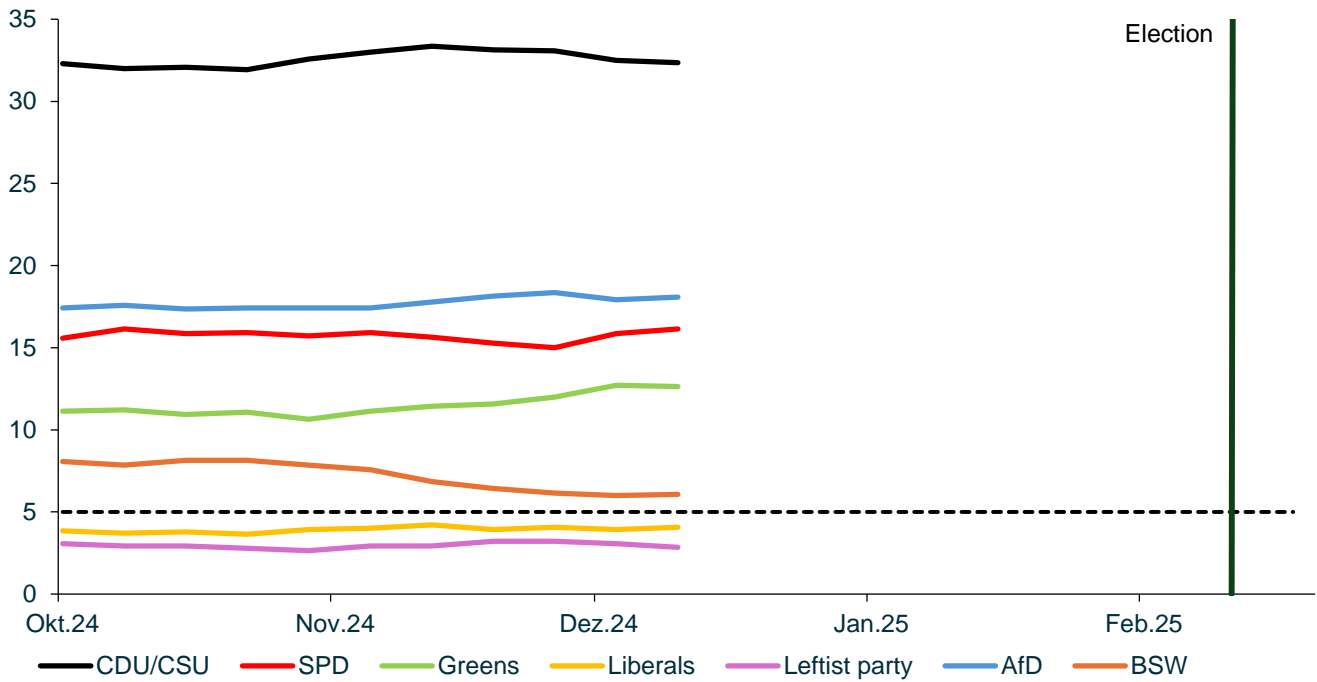
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Chart 1 - CDU/CSU with a big lead, FDP and Left party below 5%

Parties' share of the vote in the next general election, average of the most recent projections by 8 opinion research institutes, in percent



Source: wahlrecht.de, Commerzbank Research

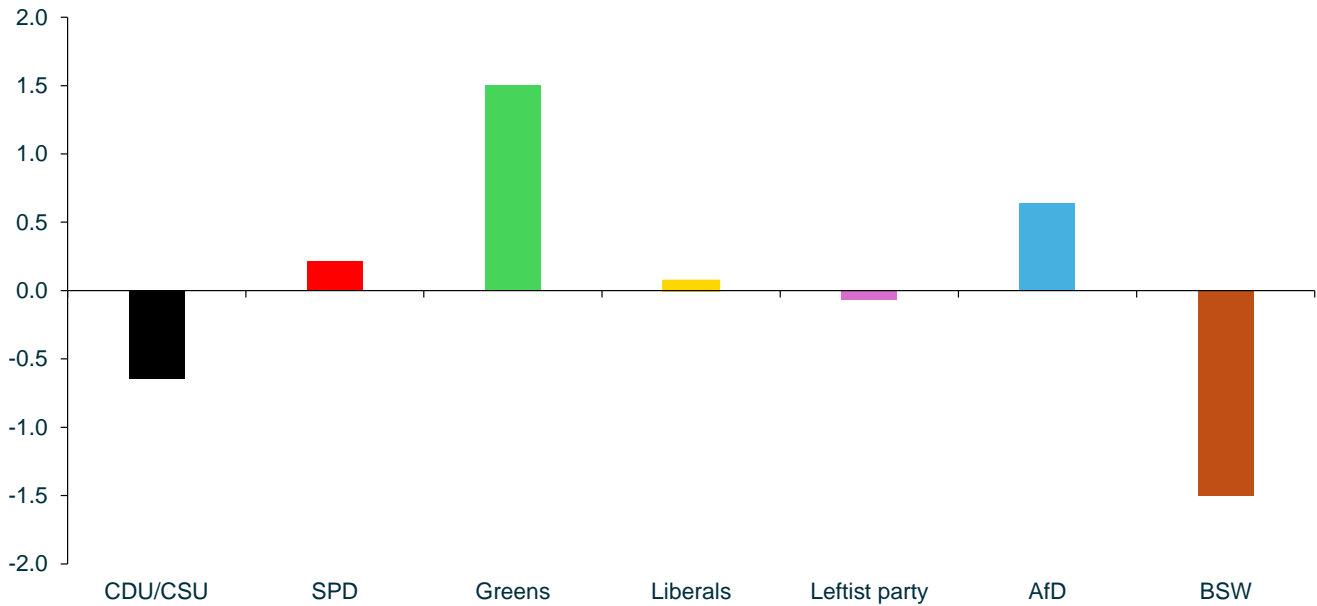
The big winners since the break-up of the governing coalition are the Greens. They have improved by around 1½ percentage points on average in the projections of the 8 opinion research institutes we looked at (Chart 2). The main losers were the new party "Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht" (BSW) and, to a lesser extent, the CDU/CSU. The coalition options based on the projections have not changed. If the Left Party and the FDP manage to re-enter the Bundestag, a coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD would still be the only two-party



combination that would achieve a majority in the Bundestag. If at least one of the two parties fails to reach the 5% threshold, a coalition between the CDU/CSU and the Greens would probably just about to reach a slim majority of seats.

Chart 2 - Greens on the rise, BSW loosing

Parties' share of the vote in the next general election, average of the latest projections by 8 opinion research institutes, change compared to the beginning of November in percentage points



Source: wahlrecht.de, Commerzbank Research

The SPD's race to catch up has not yet begun

The SPD has made only a small gain compared to five weeks ago. The SPD's race to catch up with the CDU/CSU, which the SPD leadership and Chancellor Scholz in particular have been calling for, has not yet begun.

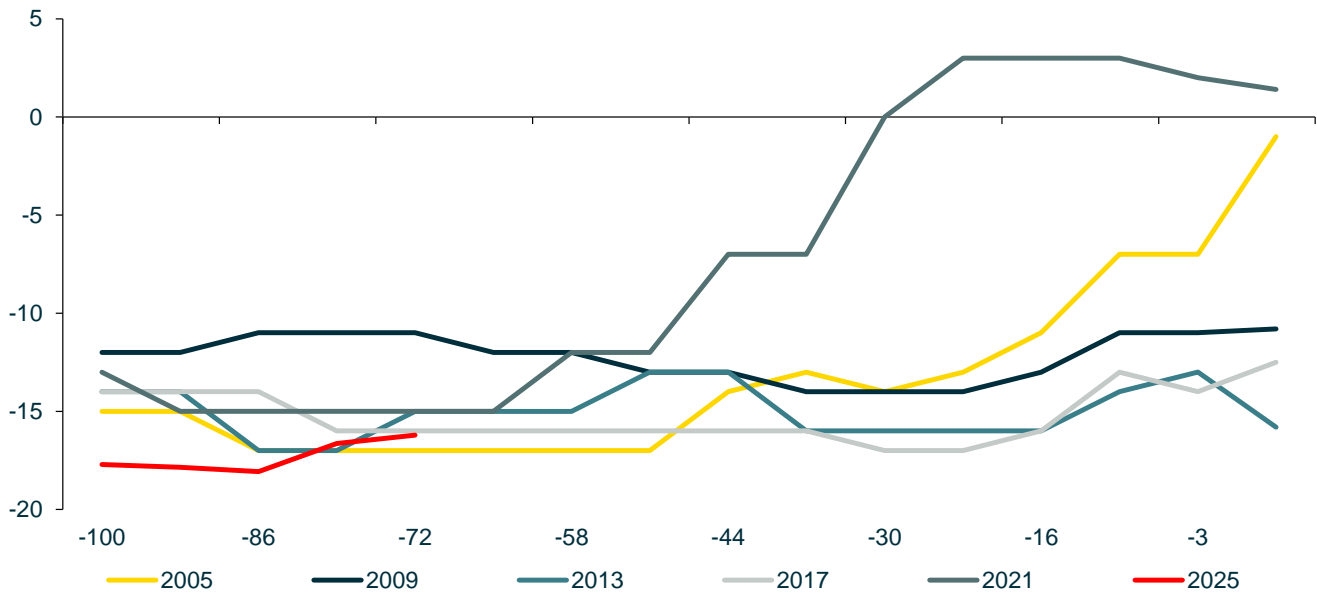
However, it is not too late for this either. In all elections since 2005, the SPD has been well behind the CDU/CSU at this point - a good 70 days before the election date. In two of these five elections, it was able to reduce the gap significantly, and in the last election in 2021 it even overtook the CDU/CSU, although at that time the SPD's gap was not quite as large as it is currently (Chart 3). In the



2005 election, the gap was even slightly larger at that time, and yet Gerhard Schröder almost made up for it by the election date. The election is by no means decided yet.

Chart 3 - SPD gap to CDU/CSU not much larger than in previous elections

Distance between the SPD's values in the projections of Forschungsgruppe Wahlen (Politbarometer) and those of the CDU/CSU, in percentage points; 2025: average of the projections of 8 opinion research institutes; negative values show the SPD lagging behind



Source: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Politbarometer, wahlrecht.de, Commerzbank Research

Former publications on the general election 2025:

- ["What happens to the debt break?"](#), Economic Insight 21 November 2024
- ["German election update - Upper house a big hurdle for the next government"](#), Economic Insight 2 December 2024



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