



**A new association of electoral researchers in Germany:  
the German Society for Electoral Studies (DGfW)**

In recent decades, German empirical electoral research has compiled a wealth of findings. As a sub-discipline of political science it has attained high theoretical and methodological standards, and enjoys an excellent international reputation. Nevertheless, German electoral research lacks a desideratum of decisive strategic importance: namely, a firmly established, long-term financed German national election study. Electoral attitudes and voter behavior in German federal elections have been analyzed on a high scientific level for a number of decades, but these studies have a distinct ad-hoc character from the scientific, organizational, and human resources perspective. This leads to several serious disadvantages for electoral research in Germany that only an institutionalized national election study of the kind existing in several other contemporary democracies, such as the American National Election Study, the British Election Study, or the Canadian Election Study, can remedy. Furthermore, the German CSES study was never on secure ground, fighting for money in competition with other voter studies in Germany.

In January 2007, German academic electoral researchers seized the initiative to establish a national electoral study, the German Election Study. The German Society for Electoral Studies (DGfW) was officially founded as a self-organized body of German academic electoral researchers, on 20 July 2007. Its mission is to initiate, on behalf of the entire community of electoral researchers in Germany, the institutionalization of this study. At present the DGfW is preparing an initial survey in the context of this new institutionalized research program; it is planned to carry out this survey during the coming federal elections (presumably autumn 2009). With this first inquiry, it is intended to lay the foundations of an empirical political research infrastructure, designed to ensure continuity and to guarantee high quality analyses, yielding specifics on individual elections and long-term trends in political behavior in Germany, which are reliable and state-of-the-art as regards theory and methodology. The DGfW explicitly makes the CSES module a permanent part of the German election study, and stands for the cooperation with comparable research programs in other democratic countries. Thus the German Election Study is to become an inherent part of the worldwide edifice of national and internationally comparative electoral studies, and CSES in particular.

Academic electoral researchers who are interested to support and contribute to this work are invited to join the DGfW. For further information see <http://www.dgfw.info>.

With kind regards,  
the Executive Committee

Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck, University of Duisburg-Essen  
Prof. Dr. Hans Rattinger, University of Bamberg  
Prof. Dr. Sigrid Roßteutscher, University of Frankfurt  
PD Dr. Bernhard Weßels, Social Science Research Center Berlin