

7 facts about the online campaign of the 2025 Bundestagswahl

Eight months after the vote, Meta and Google switched off political advertising in the EU and Google wiped its archive - which makes February 2025 the last German federal election whose paid online campaign can still be counted

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The last campaign anyone can count

Every German election since February 2025 has been fought without paid political advertising on Meta or Google, and without the archives that made the paid half of a campaign checkable. The Bundestagswahl of 23 February 2025 is therefore the last one whose machinery can still be taken apart: who ran it, what it cost, how many ads, which channel carried it. Taken apart, it shows three things. The money went to the parties that lost. The reach went to the parties that spent the least. And the record of all of it is already half gone.

The 7 facts

1. Six agencies and one party without one

Every big party hired an agency; the one that gained the most did not. The CDU worked with FischerAppelt, the SPD with Brinkert Lück, the Greens with Jung von Matt, the FDP with Heimat TBWA, Die Linke with Die Berliner Botschaft, Volt with the Berlin agency Part. The AfD held a pitch and then kept the campaign in-house¹. The account that mattered most in the end, Heidi Reichinnek's TikTok, ran from her own parliamentary office.

2. €8.3 million, most of it spent by the losers

Three days before the vote, party spending on digital ads across Meta, Google and Snapchat stood at about €8.3 million - level with the same point in 2021, a campaign that then closed at €9.6 million². The mix flipped while the total stood still: two weeks out, Meta had taken €3.3 million, down from €4.2 million in 2021, and Google with YouTube €1.5 million, up from €699,000².

Where the ads themselves can be counted, between 14 January and 12 February the Greens ran more than 6,000 distinct ads on Meta for about €1.2 million, the FDP 2,000 for over €500,000, the CDU and CSU 2,300 for roughly €400,000, the SPD more than 2,600 for €300,000; 14 of the 29 parties on the ballot spent more than €3 million between them in those 4 weeks³. Counted over three months and with candidate pages included, the same data puts the Greens and Robert Habeck at €3 million, the FDP at €1.95 million and the AfD at €640,000⁴. On Google, 81% of party money went to YouTube, and Volt - a party that finished on 0.7% - spent about €393,000 there, more than the SPD⁵.

None of these figures is exact. Both libraries publish spend as ranges, so every total is a sum of bucket midpoints, and the answer moves with the window and with which pages count as the party. What does not move: the party that spent the most, the Greens, lost 3.1 points to 11.6%, and the FDP, second in every count, fell out of the Bundestag at 4.3%⁶.

[Ad Library](#)
[Ad Library Report](#)
[Ad Library API](#)
[Branded Content](#)

Germany

All ads

BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN

BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN

[Ads](#)

About

~6,500 results

Keyword

Filters

Sort by

Impressions by date: Between Jan 1, 2025 – Feb 22, 2025

Inactive

Library ID: 516404654823213

Feb 18, 2025 - Feb 22, 2025

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: >1M

Amount spent (EUR): €3.5K - €4K

Impressions: >1M

See ad details

BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN

Sponsored

This ad ran without a required disclaimer.

Inactive

Library ID: 483550194809304

Feb 15, 2025 - Feb 20, 2025

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: >1M

Amount spent (EUR): €8K - €9K

Impressions: >1M

See ad details

BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN

Sponsored · Paid for by Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

Nur wir halten Kurs beim Klimaschutz – und das ganz fair. Wir reformieren klimaschädliche Subventionen, fördern CO₂-sparende Unternehmen & setzen auf grünen Zement und Stahl. Naturschutz, Artenvielfalt & erneuerbare Energien gehen Hand in Hand. Dafür braucht es aber eine Kraft in der Regierung, die für echten Klimaschutz auch die Verantwortung übernimmt. Zeit für Habeck.

Inactive

Library ID: 2103557720173062

Dec 28, 2024 - Jan 10, 2025

Platforms

Categories

3 ads use this creative and text

See summary details

BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN

Sponsored · Paid for by Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

Ein Jahrhunderthochwasser jagt das nächste, jeden Sommer erreichen wir neue Hitzerekorde: Die Klimakrise bedroht unser Leben und die Lebenschancen unserer Kinder. Das zeigt auch: Wenn wir über Klimaschutz reden, reden wir eigentlich über den Schutz von Menschen. Über den Schutz unseres Wohlstands, unserer Freiheit, unserer Sicherheit, unserer Zukunft.

The Greens' ads are still in the library, all 6,500 of them Meta Ad Library, BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN, ads with impressions between 1 January and 22 February 2025, captured 9 September 2026. facebook.com/ads/library. Quoted under §51 UrhG.

3. Red wine, schnitzel, pork

Microtargeting was routine and occasionally ugly. The CSU and the BSW ran no targeting at all; almost every other Bundestag party did. An SPD candidate in Baden-Württemberg aimed ads at people interested in "Turkish cuisine" and "the Turkish national football team". An AfD candidate in Hesse targeted interests in "red wine", "Wiener schnitzel" and "pork" - a filter that quietly leaves out Jewish and Muslim voters⁴. His three ads are still in the library: under €400 between them, 48,000 to 59,000 impressions, an estimated audience of more than a million. On 31 January, the day of the migration vote with AfD support, the Greens spent more than €93,000 on Meta in a single day⁴.

WHO THE AD WAS FOR

Interests used to pick the audience

Rotwein

red wine

Wiener Schnitzel

Wiener schnitzel

Schweinefleisch

pork

Advertiser	Klaus Herrmann, AfD, constituency 176 Wetterau I
Ads in the library	3, run between 14 January and 23 February 2025
Spend disclosed	under €400 in total
Impressions disclosed	48,000 to 59,000
Estimated audience	more than 1 million accounts

Interests: Who Targets Me browser-extension data, as reported by ZDF on 21 February 2025

Ad data: Meta Ad Library, read 9 September 2026

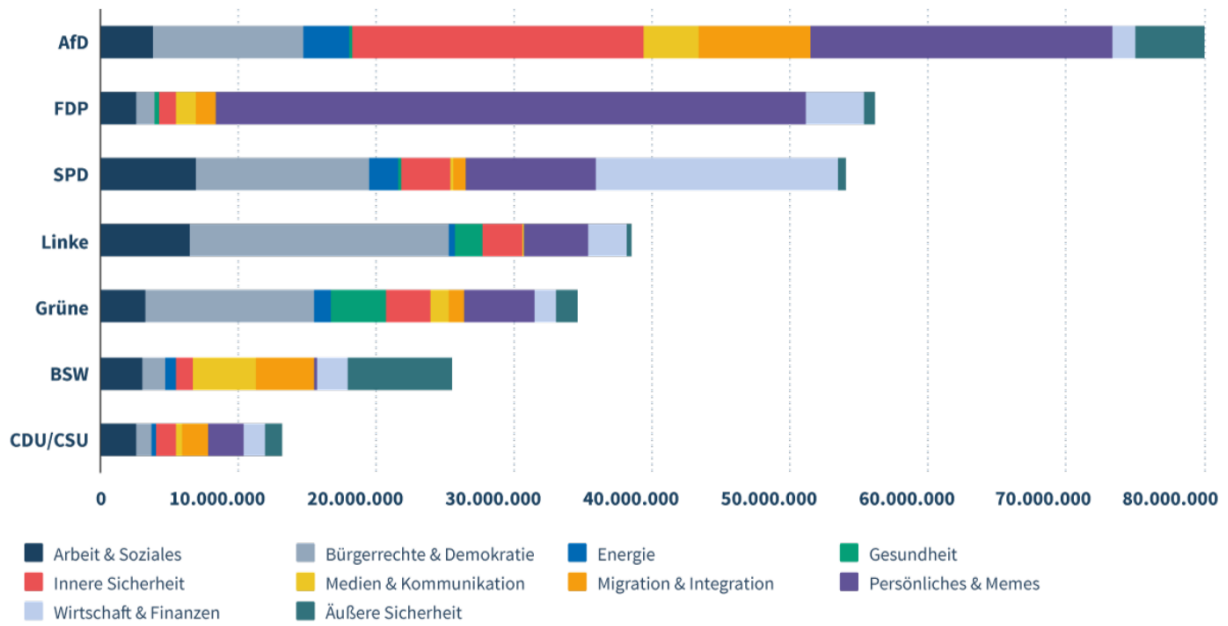
| The audience one candidate paid for

4. 98 million views nobody paid for

TikTok sold none of this. The platform has banned political advertising everywhere since October 2019⁷, so every TikTok number here is reach nobody paid for. Across the accounts of all members of the Bundestag, from 1 November to 16 February, AfD videos collected about 98 million views, the SPD 73 million, the FDP 69 million, Die Linke 54 million, the Greens 49 million, the BSW 31 million and CDU/CSU together 19 million⁸. More than half of the FDP's total was one clip of Christian Lindner being hit with a cream cake.

Heidi Reichinnek posted 29 videos between 1 January and election day and reached 31.6 million views with them at an engagement rate of 15%; Die Linke's party account did 16% on 122 videos. The CDU's account posted 153 videos for 4%, Friedrich Merz 110 for 3%⁹. Reichinnek's Instagram following went from 76,000 to 487,000 in the same weeks¹⁰. Die Linke finished on 8.8%, up 3.9 points on 2021⁶, and took 27.3% of the vote among people under 25 - the AfD's strongest age group was 35 to 44, at 27.1%¹¹.

Anzahl Aufrufe auf TikTok nach politischer Partei und Thema



Datengrundlage: TikTok Videos aller Mitglieder des Deutschen Bundestags, die einen TikTok Account besitzen, hochgeladen zwischen dem 01.11.2024 und dem 16.02.2025

TikTok views by party and topic, all Bundestag members, November to February Böhmer, Engler, Schröder, IW-Kurzbericht 18/2025, Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft, 21 February 2025. [iwkoeln.de](#). Quoted under §51 UrhG.



Play

The speech that carried the surge - Reichinnek in the Bundestag, end of January 2025. Die Linke

5. The fans outran the party

The official AfD accounts were not the largest AfD presence. Fan accounts posting under the #afd hashtag drew 120 million views in the campaign window, the official accounts 75.5 million¹². Of the party's 18 state, federal and EU accounts, only 6 could be verified through official channels. Alice Weidel's own account had 854,700 followers and 92.4 million views on 272 videos.

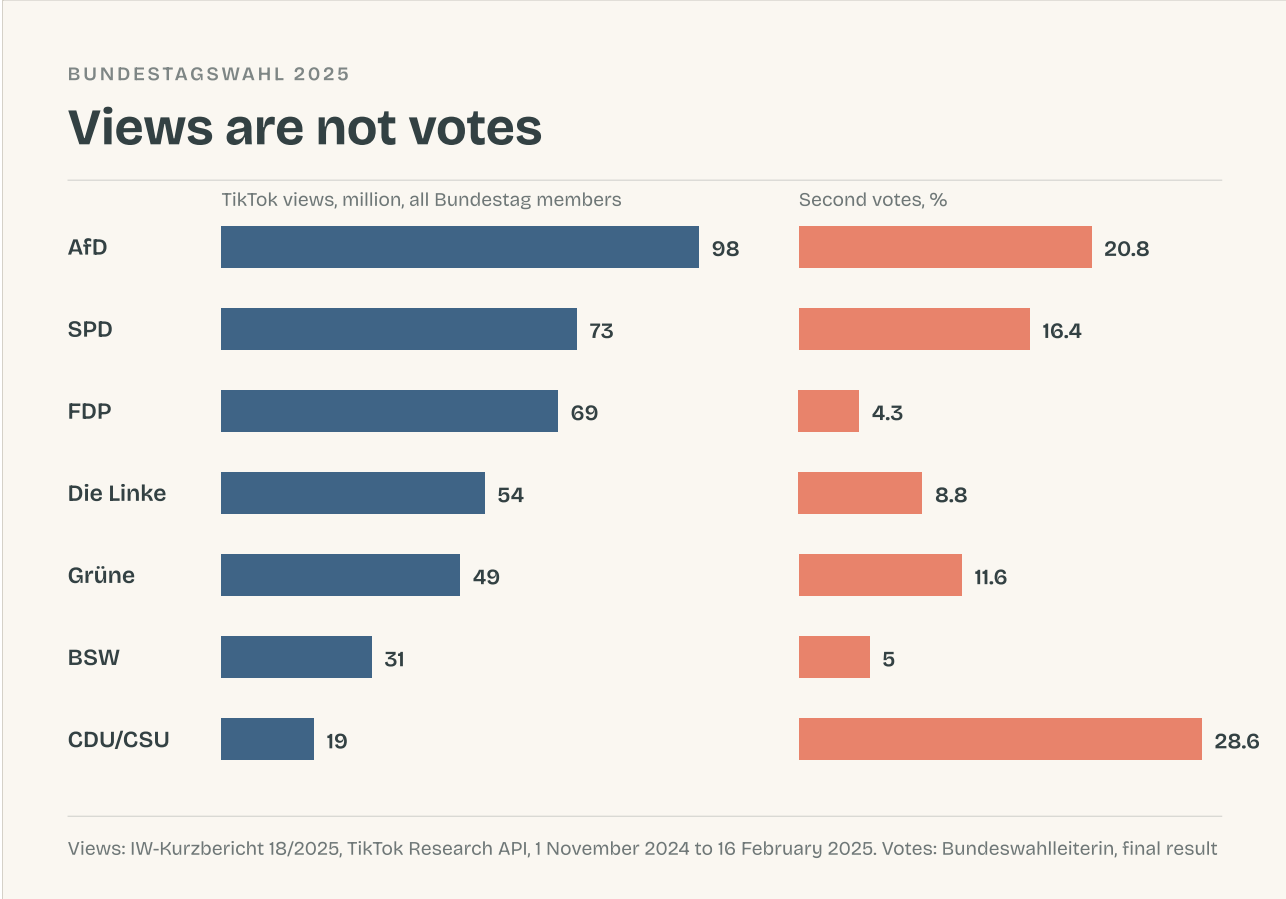
The recommender did its part. Global Witness seeded fresh accounts with equal interest in the CDU, AfD, SPD and Greens; of the party-political content TikTok then recommended from accounts they did not follow, 78% supported the AfD, on X 64%¹³. A study of 25,292 videos found AfD content earning 206% more likes than the SPD's, and Die Linke's 372% more¹⁴. The IDZ, reading 26,000 videos from 2,200 accounts, found no evidence that the platform favoured the AfD beyond what its posting volume explained¹⁵. Both things are in the record.

6. The AI wave came to 0.6%

Generative AI was a rounding error. The CampAIgn Tracker at the University of Mainz went through about 70,000 posts from some 3,000 party and candidate accounts: 550 were AI-made, 0.6%. The AfD led with 30, which was 2.83% of its own output. More than 90% of the AI posts were images, 86% carried no label, and they averaged 52 likes against 20 for everything else¹⁶.

7. 102 fake newspapers, caught in real time

The foreign operation was documented in real time. From 19 November 2024 an operation later named Storm-1516 registered more than 100 German-language fake news domains - "Berliner Wochenzeitung", "Scheinwerfer", "Widerhall" - and ran deepfakes accusing Robert Habeck, Annalena Baerbock and the FDP's Marcus Faber of crimes and affairs¹⁷. Correctiv listed 102 domains by 4 February. CeMAS counted links to them posted 692 times across 395 German Telegram channels between July 2024 and 23 January 2025, for 4.7 million views¹⁸. In July 2025 the EU sanctioned 15 people and entities for the operation¹⁹. In December 2025 the federal government formally attributed it to the Kremlin; that became public in May 2026²⁰.



What the same parties got in views and in votes

8 months later

On 14 November 2024, before the campaign had started, Google announced it would stop serving political ads in the EU rather than comply with the Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising regulation²¹. On 25 July 2025 Meta said the same²². On 6 October 2025 political, electoral and social-issue ads stopped delivering on Facebook and Instagram in all 27 member states, 4 days before the regulation became applicable.

Google went one step further. Around 28 September 2025 its Ads Transparency Center stopped showing political ads for any EU country - seven years of them, past and present, gone²³. Open the tool today, choose a region: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, India, Israel, Mexico, New

Zealand, South Africa, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, the United States. Germany is not on the list.

Google Ads Transparency Center

Sign in

Political Advertising on Google

Select a supported region

	Argentina
	Australia
	Brazil
	Chile
	India
	Israel
	Mexico
	New Zealand
	South Africa
	Taiwan
	United Kingdom
	United States

Google's political ad transparency tool, region list, September 2026 Google Ads Transparency Center, political advertising, region selector, captured 9 September 2026. adstransparency.google.com. Quoted under §51 UrhG.

Meta kept its archive. Its report for Germany now describes itself as covering ads "between September 2019 and October 2025": 1,199,014 ads, €159.7 million, and a counter that will not move again²⁴. The Greens' 6,500 ads from the campaign are still there, with their spend bands and impressions. That page is the last complete record of a German federal campaign that paid for its reach.

Meta

Ad LibraryAd Library ReportAd Library APIBranded Content

Meta Ad Library Report

Germany ▼

Explore, filter and download data for ads about social issues, elections or politics between September 2019 and October 2025. See overall spending totals, spending by specific advertisers and spend data by geographic location.

This publicly accessible report is part of Meta's efforts to increase transparency in advertising.



Ad Library totals

Includes ads about social issues, elections or politics (since September 2019)

Total number of ads in the Ad Library	Total amount spent
1,199,014	€159,715,380

Meta's ad library report for Germany, closed at October 2025 Meta Ad Library Report, Germany, captured 9 September 2026. facebook.com/ads/library/report. Quoted under §51 UrhG.

The regulation's own answer, a European repository for online political ads, has a technical rulebook since 9 April 2026²⁵ and, as of 9 September 2026, no go-live date, no public portal and no published interface²⁶.

The five state elections of 2026 - Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Pfalz in March, Sachsen-Anhalt on 6 September, Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on 20 September - are the first German elections with no paid political advertising on Meta or Google at all. The money went back

to paper and to regional media: Sachsen-Anhalt saw 40,000 more posters than last time²⁷. What moved online moved through organic posts, creators and recommender systems, where none of the numbers above can be reproduced. And by July 2026 the AfD was demonstrating an in-house tool, Alternita Studio, that pulls five news feeds every 15 minutes, scores each item for likely spread and drafts posts, images and subtitles on Google's, OpenAI's and Anthropic's models - OpenAI said it would investigate, the party's lawyers said the real launch is 2027²⁸.

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