

## How to win elections

The city of Gdańsk, 5th of July 2010 – How election campaigns evolved over the recent years? Which channels can be used to reach the voters? How do voters make their decisions? No matter if it is in Poland or Germany all the politicians must answer this question if they want to run a successful election campaign and get elected. In order to learn from one another and together the Friedrich Ebert Foundation organized over the period of 2-4 July a Municipal Academy in the City of Gdańsk. As part of



this event German trainers: Christian Kröning – national secretary SPD of Schleswig-Holstein, Steffen Voß – Newmedia concept coordinator for SPD Schleswig-Holstein and Achim Moeller, Elections, Leadership and Strategy Agency director met with young politicians of the Democratic Left Alliance. Municipal elections will be held in Poland in the autumn. For this reason the participants have jointly developed a concept of the right structuring and successful running of their election campaign.



In the first phase of the Municipal Academy an emphasis was put on theoretical basis of the election campaign. In line with this the election campaign should ensure that the people are provided an orientation and at the same time be credible and provide a participation possibility. Apart from that one should remember that nowadays – as

Christian Kröning indicated – there are not many voters voting always on the same party. The majority of the electorate are voters with changing preferences and persons not participating in the elections. Both groups should be increasingly the target of the election contents and participants of the projects. The keywords of the election campaign are

consequently: visualization, emotional drive, tendency to make contents more trivial and activation – added Achim Moeller.



A topic of the second part of the workshop were ways of giving politics a personal dimension and features which should be displayed by a person running an election campaign. The participants learn to properly use their competencies and better communicate with an external environment.

„A key to gain a positive feedback and charisma is listening to and trusting those with whom one talks” – highlighted Moeller – „a politician running an election campaign should talk for only 20 percent of time he has available”. In his opinion listening and asking detailed questions and thus gaining insights into matters which are of an interest to people is much more important.

Apart from that an issue of selecting topics for parties and candidates were probed. Areas, in which a political adversary has an advantage over us, should not be incorporated into the political campaign; one should strive to make sure that the campaign themes are the topics which are our strengths. Thanks to a thorough analysis one can diagnose the priority goals of our own municipality, its developmental opportunities in the mid-time perspectives and specific activities and implement them to the programs of the election campaign. „Selection of topics in this particular way can be done also along with the citizens making it an activating element. The main theme is: let us make our party a party of the future” – declared Achim Moeller.



However, how can I publicize my topics and my program, how to present it to the society? And where to take the necessary means from? The last part of the workshops was devoted to these topics: home visits, election campaign in the tramways, conversations with journalists, visits in associations, organization of municipal feasts – a candidate has

unlimited opportunities for contacts with citizens. It is important that he is open to concerns and problems of people and tried to use a knowledge acquired in this way on the political level. Creativity is also important when it comes to sourcing funds for such an election campaign. The participants were wondering in the groups what are the financing opportunities: a cinema under an open sky with a barbecue, selling food, concerts, tours of rickshaw over the city and sporting festivals. Everybody agreed that a mobilization of members of own party is a prerequisite to every election campaign. Only thanks to internal cohesion and good cooperation one can successfully convince others to their ideas and visions.

A group of 10 younger municipal politicians took on an issue of the election campaign in the internet. Led by Steffen Voss and Łukasz Naczas, a head of presidential team for candidate Grzegorz Napieralski, the participants were learning a thorough application of



new media in the election campaign. Especially in order to reach young people it is important for candidates to be present in the Internet. Naczas pointed out to a best-practice case of 2008 election campaign run by Barack Obama, who with the use of Internet mobilized many young voters who otherwise would probable not have voted at all. Apart from one's own internet sited also Youtube, Facebook and blog represent an important place to establish contacts and communication with potential voters.

The participants received during the workshops many useful guidelines pertaining to the activities in the Internet and had an opportunity to apply a freshly acquired knowledge right away. The assignment was to develop one's own internet site, a movie on the Youtube and a profile on the Facebook, which they subsequently presented to the whole group.

The workshops have shown that in order to win election campaigns everybody has to cooperate and assist in mobilizing voters. It does not only pertain to the cooperation of the younger and older generation but also transborder cooperation. Trainers and participants agreed at the end that the exchange of experiences gathered in Poland and Germany will happen more frequently which will serve the purpose of jointly strengthening of the social-democratic parties in the Baltic sea region as well as across Europe.