

Election Manifesto of the RCDS Saar for the 72nd Student Parliament Elections at Saarland University¹



Dear students,

We are the RCDS Saar, the Association of Christian² Democratic Students in Saarland. We stand for constructive university policy guided by democratic, liberal, social, European, and conservative values. We are united by the conviction that our studies should not be limited to academic coursework alone, but that we should also represent the interests of all students within university political bodies.

We advocate for the careful and economical use of student funds and continually strive to solve students' study-related problems. The mobility and equal treatment of students in Homburg and Saarbrücken are important to us. We think not only in European terms, but internationally as well.

You can find more information about our university group on Instagram.

If you have any questions about our election program, concerns, or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

If we can convince you with the topics presented in the following election program, we would be very happy to receive your vote!

Your
RCDS Saar

¹ This is the translation of the German version of this programme. In case of differences between the versions, the German one takes precedence.

² *Christian Democracy* is a term commonly used in German politics and does not mean, that it is associated with the church, rather that we are inspired by Christian values.

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In the following document, the generic masculine is predominantly used in accordance with the recommendations of the Council for German Orthography. This form includes all genders and is therefore not discriminatory in its meaning in any way.³

³ In German, this is more of a controversy, as it is in English.

1 Teaching, Research und Studies

1.1. Quality of Studies

We believe that digitalization can improve teaching, but the same is also true for in-person classes. Therefore, we support classroom-based teaching enriched with digital elements through the use of hybrid teaching models. This includes, for example, continuing to provide materials online, additionally recording lectures, and making them available digitally. The specific way in which these or other models are implemented and combined falls within the responsibility of the individual lecturers. We encourage them to continuously reflect on and improve their own teaching methods.

An important advantage of hybrid teaching is that it allows students with part-time jobs or family obligations to participate flexibly in lectures and events. If the Saarland University wants to remain competitive compared to other universities, such a step is unavoidable.

Of course, we respect academic freedom and understand that different learning content requires different methodologies and teaching approaches, so ultimately it is up to the individual lecturers to decide how they conduct their courses.

We clearly distance ourselves from the demand that fully digital studying should also be possible during normal operations. The Saarland University is not a distance-learning university! For us, in-person teaching is an essential part of studying. Especially through the COVID-19 pandemic, we learned that personal interaction on the campus enriches student life and is irreplaceable.

1.2. Career Events and Career Counseling

We advocate for the university to place greater focus on students' futures. Among a student's goals are pursuing personal interests, expanding knowledge, and developing critical thinking skills. However, another important goal is to have a strong start to one's career after graduation. Therefore, the Saarland University should organize more career-oriented events and offer students personal counseling sessions during their studies to help clarify important questions regarding their professional future. Furthermore, the university should establish more contacts and partnerships with employers, particularly in Saarland and the surrounding regions (Rhineland-Palatinate and the Saar-Lor-Lux Greater Region), in order to make it easier for students to begin their careers or find internships.

Like other universities in Germany, for example Goethe University Frankfurt, the University of Saarland should offer its students more workshops on career orientation, support for individual career planning, internship placement services, and events with companies and other potential employers.

In addition, we call on the University of Saarland to apply more actively for regional and educational funding programs provided by the European Union. Between 2021 and 2027, the EU has allocated €392 billion in so-called cohesion funds. Of this amount, €226 billion has been allocated to the European Regional Development Fund, €9 billion for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), and €1.9 billion as additional funding for outermost and sparsely populated regions. As a tri-border region with close ties to France and Luxembourg, and as a sparsely populated area, projects in Saarland and at the University of Saarland are ideally suited for this funding.

1.3. ECTS for Extracurricular Activities

University engagement that goes beyond the actual content of one's degree program should be better supported.

Events outside the mandatory curriculum allow students to "look beyond their own horizons" and provide significant added value later in professional life, especially when it comes to recognizing connections more quickly. However, in many degree programs, mandatory courses are scheduled so tightly that students prefer to focus on the classes required for their study plan in order to achieve the best possible results on the path towards a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or state examination. Instead, students should be encouraged to explore new subjects and, in particular, to study disciplines that are closely connected to their future profession, even if they lie outside their own field. This could, for example, make communication and collaboration between colleagues from different academic backgrounds easier later on. Therefore, we, the RCDS Saar, call for attendance at university courses outside one's own curriculum to be recognized with ECTS credits in more degree programs than is currently the case, following the example of the "free credits" system used, for instance, in computer science programs.

On the other hand, university engagement also includes volunteer work. Voluntary commitment is not only a form of personal fulfillment, but also an active contribution to the university community. Saarland University and the Saarland University Medical Center both depend on voluntary student involvement. The university should give something back in return for such efforts – and also provide motivation for more students to become involved in volunteer work. Therefore, we, the RCDS Saar, demand that voluntary engagement, including service in student representative bodies, be formally acknowledged in the Diploma Supplement, which documents, among other things, the professional applicability of the knowledge acquired during studies and should therefore also include student volunteer work.

1.4. No Disadvantages due to Requirements for Gender-Inclusive Language

The RCDS Saar welcomes efforts to reflect more carefully on one's choice of language. However, we would also like to bring the issue of accessibility into the debate surrounding solutions for gender-inclusive language. We reject newly coined terms that significantly impair readability.

Furthermore, the RCDS Saar explicitly advocates that no one should be disadvantaged in academic papers or examinations for using the grammatically correct generic masculine form recommended by the Council for German Orthography. Conversely, no one should face disadvantages for choosing to use gender-inclusive language.

1.5. Use of a Uniform Course Management System

The RCDS Saar advocates for the use of a standardized CMS. At present, a wide variety of platforms are being used in parallel to organize lectures and seminars (CMS, Moodle, Teams). However, the CMS is capable of fulfilling all essential functions, whether it be providing materials (such as lecture notes, slides, and links to further resources), convenient online submission options for students, quizzes, selection and voting procedures (such as choosing tutorial groups), or enabling lecturers to quickly send messages to all course participants. Currently, however, there is a tendency to scatter materials, links, and quizzes across multiple platforms, sometimes even within the same lecture.

Lecture recordings can also easily be uploaded to the CMS; Teams would only be necessary for live broadcasts.

As an initial solution, a cross-departmental Moodle instance has been introduced – in principle, a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, one may ask: why does Saarland University support an external system instead of supporting a system that was developed at our own university? Not only can new functions be integrated more easily into the CMS, but Moodle is also regularly criticized for simply having too many features and for not being organized as clearly by semester as the CMS is – something that has indeed already led to confusion. Once usability begins to suffer from an excess of unused features, it is time to find a suitable solution rather than the most powerful one possible.

The RCDS Saar supports the use of solutions that are precisely tailored to our needs and, beyond that, have also been developed locally. We therefore advocate for the use of a unified CMS throughout the entire university.

1.6. Fort he Freedom of Studies – Against a Civil Clause

For the RCDS Saar, freedom of research is a highly valuable principle. Research activities should not be restricted beyond the existing legal framework. In particular, we reject any form of a “civil clause” that would prohibit research with potential military applications. On the contrary, we are proud to be able to contribute to the defense of freedom and democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany. Furthermore, there are academic disciplines whose work is inherently applicable to military contexts, such as cybersecurity. The RCDS Saar stands behind all university chairs and firmly opposes any restrictions on their work.

1.7. Universal Usage of LSF/HISPOS

At present, several different online exam registration systems are in use at our university.

This creates unnecessary effort, especially for students pursuing a minor subject, as they are required to use multiple systems. In many cases, additional login credentials and TAN lists must also be requested for the external system. Furthermore, there is often confusion about which registration system must be used. In addition, the recording of examination results from a minor subject is frequently associated with extra effort, since this is not possible online when different systems are being used. Moreover, systems that differ from LSF/HISPOS often impose significantly earlier registration deadlines. This forces students to decide much earlier whether they want to use an examination attempt, thereby placing them at a disadvantage.

The current approach therefore places an unnecessary burden on both our students and the staff in the examination offices. For this reason, we call for the standardized use of LSF/HISPOS.

1.8. Promote Part-Time Studies

Saarland University offers the possibility of part-time study upon application for employed persons, individuals caring for children or dependent relatives, chronically ill students, and people with disabilities. However, this system currently faces problems in two important areas:

First, not every examination regulation within the respective degree programs allows for part-time study options. Therefore, we, the RCDS Saar, call for an expansion of part-time study opportunities – or comparable forms of academic relief, such as those available in the pharmacy department – to additional faculties.

Second, despite the possibility of attending fewer courses quantitatively, class schedules are not adequately adapted to the requirements of part-time study. This can result in courses being spread unnecessarily far apart during the day, meaning that students may still have to remain at the university for as long as they would in a full-time program. This is time that students caring for children or dependent relatives, in particular, may simply not be able to spare. Therefore, we, the RCDS Saar, demand that mandatory attendance requirements in certain courses be relaxed for part-time students. This applies primarily to degree programs leading to a state examination qualification.

1.9. AI Courses for Students

We generally welcome the fact that an AI theme day was held at the university. However, there should be additional events that are not solely focused on presenting a product, but that instead offer students guidance and orientation in dealing with this new technology.

2 Life at the University in Homburg and Saarbrücken

2.1. Preservation of the Cafeteria and Student Culture at the Homburg Campus

Student life on the Homburg campus largely takes place in our cafeteria building. This is where the wide range of food offerings from the cafeteria and canteen can be found, but many student organizations are also housed in the building. The student councils for medicine and dentistry, the external office of the AStA, the ZiS, the Association Medicine und Dental Medicine Homburg e.V., and its many departments are all part of it. The long-standing poor structural condition of the cafeteria building in Homburg has become a problem.

Since the cafeteria building cannot be maintained in its current form due to structural defects, there will in the future be compensatory measures for the loss of our cafeteria building. As RCDS Homburg, we want to ensure that students in Homburg continue to have access to a good, balanced, and affordable food offering. The social life on the Homburg campus must also not suffer from the loss of the old cafeteria building. Space for student engagement and informal social interaction should continue to be available.

2.2. Disability-Accessible Campus

There is still significant room for improvement regarding accessibility at Saarland University. Support measures for people with visual and hearing impairments need to be improved and expanded, including through suitable digital solutions, especially for hybrid events. In addition, many buildings are not accessible by wheelchair. This discriminates against students who depend on such accessibility. Lecture halls and workspaces are often not barrier-free to access, and elevators to upper floors as well as accessible restrooms are rather rare. The university has ignored this problem for far too long, and it must finally be addressed.

2.3. Free Time Activity Offers in Homburg

Due to the physical separation, far fewer events take place on the Homburg campus compared to the Saarbrücken campus. There is no real opportunity to get to know or invite students from other faculties, and there is also no nightlife comparable to that of Saarbrücken. Therefore, we want to bring more student life and events to Homburg for the medical students.

2.4. Promoting Religious Groups

The RCDS advocates for supporting all religious communities represented at the university. At all important events affecting every student in a faculty, such as semester opening ceremonies or the farewell of professors, the two major Christian churches and the Islamic student community should be given the opportunity to organize an accompanying religious service. To achieve this, the responsible organizations should be involved in the event planning process at an early stage. We reject deadlines that fall on a Sunday.

Smaller religious communities should no longer be disadvantaged. Non-university religious communities that can demonstrate a sufficient number of student members should, after accreditation, be treated like official student organizations and thereby be permitted in particular to host events on campus and in university facilities.

2.5. Language Courses in Homburg

The language course offering at the university hospital is currently rudimentary and is limited to a few courses in medical terminology. We reject this unequal treatment of the Homburg campus. We demand that at least the most popular courses offered in Saarbrücken are also made available in Homburg. The necessary infrastructure for this in Homburg must be established by the university.

2.6. More Seats at the Campus

Between lectures, there are often unintended breaks during which many students find it difficult to spend time in a quiet place (e.g., a common room). Instead, they prefer to go home because there are too few suitable seating areas where they can work or relax. In order to improve the quality of studying beyond direct teaching activities, more freely accessible seating areas—including tables—should be created across the entire campus in Saarbrücken and Homburg, both indoors and outdoors. In addition, more rooms should be made available for this purpose. Through motions by the RCDS Saar, additional seating has been created on campus in previous legislative periods.

2.7. New Student Building at Campus Homburg

The RCDS Saar advocates for the transformation of Building 45 on the Homburg campus into a student building, after the relocation of biochemistry to the new building of the preclinical center for molecular signal processing.

This building should primarily include new study reading rooms, which are urgently needed due to the limited number of workspaces in the library. Furthermore, we envision the creation of student common rooms within this building, as well as new spaces for the student representative bodies, including the student council and the AStA external affairs office.

2.8. One Campus Saarbrücken

The RCDS Saar advocates for expanding the Saarbrücken campus. In particular, against this background, we reject any further fragmentation of the Saarland University beyond what already exists due to the university hospital (UKS).

Once renovation measures are completed, we believe that all university institutions and chairs should move back from temporary buildings (for example at Meerwiesertalweg) to the main campus.

3 Economy, Start Up Culture and Vocational Trainings

3.1. More Cooperation with the Economy

There is a natural synergy between universities and industry. Investments from private companies can elevate research projects to a new level. Conversely, the university can significantly increase the competitiveness of companies in the Saarland region.

Therefore, the RCDS calls for simplifying cooperation with the private sector. Academic chairs should regularly be given the opportunity to present themselves to local companies and inform them about their capabilities. To facilitate investment, the university administration should support interested companies and academic departments in complying with external regulations.

The startup campus and the innovation center should in any case be preserved.

3.2. Provoking Start Ups and Start Up Internships

Start-ups offer a uniquely dynamic and creative working environment. For this reason, the university should expand its network with start-ups and organize events and workshops in which start-ups can present themselves and inform students about their companies and internship opportunities.

In addition, a university website should be created that lists all current start-ups in the Saarland region, giving students an overview of the start-up scene.

3.3. Recognition of Academic Achievements in Dual Vocational Trainings

For students who decide not to continue their studies, it must be possible to have completed academic achievements credited toward a dual vocational training program. Therefore, we demand that the university administration, in cooperation with the Chambers of Industry and Commerce, work toward making examination regulations for journeyman and master craftsman qualifications more flexible.

4 Infrastructure and Traffic

4.1. Semester Ticket

The RCDS advocates for a semester ticket that represents the best and most affordable option for the largest possible number of students to travel to the university. We are open to all conceivable models in this regard.

In addition to the previous Saarland ticket and the Deutschlandticket, this includes a ticket for the Saarbrücken city or regional association, or a mobility flat rate that could also include e-scooters, for example.

For financing, a basic solidarity model is suitable, in which the semester ticket can be purchased at a subsidized price.

4.2. Cars and Bicycles at the Campus

We advocate for a reform of the postal code regulation, as it misrepresents the university's catchment area. Not all districts of Saarbrücken can be defined as "too close" to the university. Cities such as Zweibrücken, Kaiserslautern, and Trier, as well as similarly distant locations, cannot be classified as "too far away," as reality shows.

We demand that students from these areas be granted access to the parking garages. At the same time, we call on the university to create new parking facilities, discontinue the "car-reduced campus" project, and refrain from further converting parking spaces into other uses. The conversion of nearly 70 parking spaces into a pedestrian zone has further exacerbated the already strained parking situation on campus for years. Therefore, we call for the construction of a new parking garage to ease the situation. Furthermore, students' cars must continue to be granted access to the campus grounds.

Both on the Saarbrücken campus and at the university hospital in Homburg, bicycle parking facilities are also insufficient in number and quality. Many buildings have no bicycle racks at all. Another issue is that most existing parking facilities are not covered. A further problem on the Homburg campus is that the few cycle paths are so poorly signposted that minor accidents frequently occur. While expanding bicycle parking is desirable, it is of little use if the routes to them are unsafe.

We therefore advocate for the consistent expansion of bicycle paths and better signage for them. This requires the RCDS Saar student association to initiate discussions with Saarland University and the UKS and to participate in planning a bicycle-friendly campus. The RCDS Saar also supports the expansion of covered bicycle stands and safe cycling infrastructure in large numbers on both campuses.

4.3. Improved public transport connections to the Saarland University at the Saarbrücken campus and to the University Hospital of Saarland

We advocate for examining a rail-based connection to the Saarbrücken campus, the relocation and expansion of Scheidt station as an alternative transport link to the Saarland University, and the

adjustment of timetables to lecture schedules, as well as the inclusion of the Homburg campus in the transport development plan.

In addition, we support the shuttle bus between Saarbrücken and Homburg operating in the evenings as well, so that cultural and student activities can be better accessed by students from both campuses.

4.3. Building Renovations

We welcome the renovation measures for the old buildings on the Saarbrücken campus. However, we also demand that the student cafeteria (Mensa), which is operated by the student services organization, be renovated as well. The Saarland state should provide financial support for this initiative.

4.4. Pedestrian Crossings on Campus Homburg

The safety of students, as well as patients and staff at the University Hospital of Saarland, is very important to us. For this reason, we consider it necessary to create several new pedestrian crossings at key locations on the campus.

We identify a hazard at the transition from the parking garage toward Building 6 (clinics for ear, nose and throat medicine, urology, and dermatology). Currently, there is no pedestrian crossing at the lower end of the parking garage in the direction of Ringstraße, although we believe it is urgently needed. Many students who park in the garage must cross this road to attend classes, currently without a designated crosswalk, which regularly leads to dangerous situations.

Another hazard is located at the crossing from Building 68 (genetic counseling center) toward the canteen. At this location as well, many students—such as those coming from the anatomy lecture hall—cross the road without a pedestrian crossing, which also often results in dangerous situations.

We advocate for the creation of new pedestrian crossings at these locations in order to make the campus safer for everyone.

5 Student Self-Governance and University Administration

5.1. General Students' Committee (AStA)

We advocate for a cost-efficient and effective General Students' Committee (AStA). We fundamentally reject departments whose areas of responsibility overlap thematically. We stand for ensuring that the AStA does not waste student funds, this includes avoiding overstaffing of departments as well as ensuring responsible handling of allocated budgets.

In the student parliament, we support a review of the activities and performance of AStA representatives. We welcome the developments in this regard during the last term.

5.2. Students' Councils

We call for increased funding for student councils. The student councils should be able to freely dispose of these funds in order to better shape their exceptional commitment to the university's students. In this way, financial resources would be distributed more fairly and in a more student-oriented manner.

5.3. Genuine Equality instead of Preferential Treatment of Any Gender

For the RCDS Saar, equality means equal rights for all genders, not the preferential treatment of any gender. In terms of remuneration in the same position, as well as opportunities in professional life and career advancement, no gender-based differences can or should exist, to name just a few examples. We condemn any form of sexism.

However, we view a mandatory gender quota as a restriction rather than a solution to the problem. Where genuine equality in the sense of equal opportunity exists, quotas or special regulations are not necessary.

5.4. Against the Establishment of Extremism

The RCDS Saar advocates that extremist groups should not be given a platform at the university. Examples mentioned include Antifa groups and affiliated organisations, the Identitarian Movement Germany, as well as the fraternities "Ghibellinia zu Prag" in Saarbrücken.

The RCDS Saar works toward ensuring that groups classified as extremist by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution are not given opportunities to spread their ideology. There must be no place at the university for historical revisionism, post-factual radicalisation, or vandalism.

We fundamentally reject the use of the AStA's political education department as a tool for promoting specific ideological positions. We see this department as having a broader civic educational mandate. Accordingly, educational and civic aspects that appeal to centrist and conservative student groups should also be taken into account.

All events and statements organised or carried out by this department must comply with the principles of the free democratic basic order.

5.5. Transparent Fees: Clarity about your €400 per Year

We welcome the disclosure of the use of funds to the Student Parliament (StuPa). However, we demand that these figures be published for all students.

6 Studies and Health

6.1. Establishment of Relaxation Rooms

To take the psychological burden on students seriously, it is important to provide students with opportunities to rest on campus. We therefore advocate for the creation of quiet rooms on the Homburg campus of the Saarland University. These should serve as retreat spaces that can be used during a long day at university in order to rest.

They should be equipped in as low-stimulation a way as possible so that they can also function as a refuge for students who are not feeling well and who need a break from the many stimuli of the university hospital environment. We see suitable space for such rooms, for example, in the soon-to-be-vacated Building 45.

We also support the establishment of such quiet rooms on the Saarbrücken campus in order to make long stays on campus more comfortable, for instance when the first lecture is early in the morning and the last ends at eight in the evening, or during intensive phases of coursework.

6.2. Expanding of Psychological Counseling

We welcome the service provided by the psychological and psychotherapeutic counseling center established by the student services organization. However, it has become apparent that the existing offer falls far short of meeting demand. Those affected report long waiting times and too few places in self-help groups.

To improve the current situation, the RCDS Saar therefore calls for the counseling center to be staffed with additional personnel.