

vertrouwelijk

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Christian-social spearheads in election campaigns

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## **[sheet 1]**

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

What a wonderful day it is today. We find ourselves in good company. It is good to see and hear you here today.

And what a beautiful city Aarau is and especially this location, giving this meeting a little something extra.

But most of all: this is a great day because today we can strengthen our mission.

Each of us in our own country, and together for Europe.

As Europeans, we also share a joint same mission. A mission we wish to carry out and implement for the welfare of our country, of Europe and of the world.

I believe that this is where we, as a movement, have many opportunities.

We have seen this happening in the Netherlands.

We are facing a great challenge.

## **[sheet 2]**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Christian Union has been part of the Dutch government since February 2007. We contribute two Ministers and a State Secretary. We also hold six of the 150 seats that together form the Dutch Lower House, something you can compare with the English House of Commons.

The Dutch government comprises three parties: CDA, the Christian Centre Democratic party; PvdA, a socialist party; and the Christian Union. As the smallest party, the Christian Union more or less acts as a mediator between the other two parties.

The current government celebrated its first anniversary on 22th of February. Although we did not celebrate this in a dramatic fashion way, we are nevertheless particularly grateful

for the contribution we have been able to make to our society. We wish to and indeed can make a difference, if we get things right.

### **[sheet 3]**

Dear friends,

This environment made it very hard for the Christian Union to reach new voters. Many voters who did in fact match our background and convictions preferred to give their votes to CDA because it was so much bigger and because it was considered a potential government party. Or they decided to vote strategically: they wanted CDA to remain a strong factor alongside socialist PvdA and liberal VVD.

You will understand that this has made CDA the biggest competitor of the Christian Union.

### **[sheet 5]**

The Christian Union was “born” a merger between two small Christian parties in 2000: RPF and GPV. The Christian Union hoped that this merger would lead to a breakthrough with the voter, but this was not the case. Together, the parties lost one seat.

## **[sheet 6]**

Friends, you will understand that things really had to change after 2004. And they did. One of the first actions the party took was the introduction of a ‘Permanent Campaign’. Using people from our party from across the country, the Christian Union now takes action when faced with issues the party wishes to engage in. It is vital for any party to always be in the public eye. The permanent campaign aims to make the Christian Union visible, to surprise, and to position it as a relevant party with clear views that must be taken seriously.

For instance, the Christian Union campaigned for help for drug addicts and also supports an organization that provides rehabilitation clinics.

### **[sheet 7]**

It also took action against gambling addiction and government-controlled casinos.

It invited people to sign a petition and the petition was presented to the Members of Parliament .

### **[sheet 8 , 9 en 10]**

The Christian Union also campaigned by bike, presenting an image that was entirely different from what many people expected from it.

### **[sheet 10]**

The Christian Union also drew attention to Child Labour – Fair Trade. Together we

showed that we will stand up for those people in society that are most vulnerable.

### **[sheet 11]**

Meanwhile, the party got ready for the 2006 elections.

### **[sheet 12]**

The survey also showed that the Christian Union had the potential to win seats.

### **[sheet 13]**

Dear friends,

This represented a big change for the Christian Union. Not regarding its principles, views or political course. After all, these have remained the same. With our excellent communication media strategy, and our

presentation in particular, we succeeded in making a strategic appeal to the voters.

The challenge for the Christian Union was to make itself heard in a modern society that is becoming increasingly less Christian.

The Christian Union needed to reformulate its spearheads, without changing the contents of its message. After all, it is this content that makes the Christian Union what it is.

While the message itself did not change, its presentation did.

In 2006 the Christian Union choose three clear themes:

- youth and family
- vulnerable groups
- environment

The November 2006 elections showed that our message realised its goal. The party doubled its number of seats in Parliament from three to six. And the full potential has not yet been realised.

## **[sheet 14]**

After the successful elections of 2006 we had a good look at what exactly had been responsible for our success. What were the success factors we should repeat in upcoming campaigns?

## **[sheet 15]**

Another success factor is the fact that the party's candidates come from many different levels within the party. Protestants from different churches and evangelical communities. Younger and older candidates. And people from different ethnic backgrounds.

## **[sheet 16]**

The party has also improved the way it interacts with social trends:



- the importance of community is being rediscovered
- people are becoming increasingly fed up with individualism and the unilateral emphasis on market operations
- the to-each-his-own atmosphere, hard-fought-for in the sixties, is slowly losing its appeal. People are starting to talk about decency, about norms and values, about rights and obligations, and about the relevance of raising and educating children well.
- in addition, attention to relationships is growing. Communities are about people living together. The quality of society will increase if everyone can take part, if people pay attention to one another. A society needs a lot more than just a growing economy.

**[sheet 17]**

Thanks to this new position, and the fresh, authentic new party leader, the Christian Union finally succeeded in getting through to the media, and therefore the people in the country.

Party leader André Rouvoet and the other candidates received countless invitations from national and regional media for appearances and interviews. The campaign of November 2006 was fought harder than ever before.

The elections were preceded by the big national television debate in which the leaders of the seven biggest parties took part. The Christian Union also received an invitations to participate – its first one ever.

What is crucial in such a final debate is that the party leader is ready for action, responds well, gives quick answers, and distinguishes himself from the other parties as best he can.

After the elections the Christian Union drew a few lessons for itself, also with an eye to upcoming campaigns.

## **[sheet 19]**

### 2 Biblical lessons

The Bible is an ancient book that comprises many wise lessons on determining strategies we can still use today.

Some examples:

Elect representatives who can bring across the big picture

Ensure that the message reaches all

I'm convinced that you too can come up with a few examples of strategic actions and communication activities taken from the Bible.

## **[sheet 20]**

It can be incredibly difficult to bring a message across. We all know that. The media want

news, they want riots and confrontations to attract attention. After all – that's often what it is all about. The trick is to get through this, and to present the message such that the media become interested or can no longer ignore it. In its last campaign the Christian Union took this into account when it approached the media.

Our media policy was based on the following concepts:

- the content must be fresh, inspiring and creative
- there is no such thing as *the* media; the various types of media and their backgrounds must be specified
- use national media for big news, to present the corporate image of the party and the positioning of the party for the elections
- devote plenty of attention to regional media (radio, newspapers and commercials), because regional media also reach lots of voters

- use the Internet and Internet communities channels, such as Hyves and YouTube, as these are the media through which to reach young voters
- specify not only target groups and targets, but real people of flesh and blood, and determine which media are to be used to reach them; distinguish for instance between Christian immigrants, Roman Catholics, Evangelicals and young people.
- another crucial point is monitoring media reports, analysing statements in the media and the public opinion, and determining your response. In the heat of the campaign it is essential to continue to do this consistently. Read what is written about the party, analyse what is happening, and try to respond by means of your message.

These concepts have been very important for the Christian Union, enabling it to structure its relationship with the media and to get results. These help us to act in an organised manner

and build up and kindle media interest in the party.

## **[sheet 21]**

And one more piece of advice: be creative and assertive.

During the last campaign, the Christian Union toured the country in an eye—catching bus, carrying the faces of the party's first ten candidates. It not only gave the campaign a human face, but also indicated that these people would go all the way. Never before had we shown ourselves in such an assertive manner, and this surprised many media and voters.

## **[sheet 22]**

In addition to all this advice, I'd also like to warn of possible pitfalls where Christian parties may trip up:

- Christian parties are often much too sender-driven. They think from their own point of view rather than the point of view of the recipient
- Modesty about our size can also be a pitfall, confirmed by the media's tendency to devote attention solely to the big parties
- The lack of distance between church and party may also be a pitfall. After all, the tasks of Christian politics is different from the tasks of the Church. The Church presents the Christian message, while politics aims to promote peace and justice for all
- Christian parties sometimes restrict themselves to traditional subjects, while Christian politics is about so much more

### **[sheet 23]**

To avoid these pitfalls, Christian beliefs must be translated time and again into concrete plans and examples that are relevant to

today's society. If not, they will simply fail to get attention from the media and people.

The Christian Union focuses on the recipients, tries to get under the skin of the public and to bring its message such that it is understood by everyone.

### **[sheet 24]**

In conclusion:

These are some tools that can help to influence the media :

- 1 Monitor the media, analyse the trends, respond instantly and adequately
- 2 Build a sound media network
- 3 Talk to the publishers
- 4 Use the outcome of election polls to decide on the strategy
- 5 Do your own research, know your (potential) voters



- 6 Test your messages before you publish them, see how they come across
- 7 Give the key representatives and spokespeople media training

If we do our homework, we can have a bright future as Christian parties in Europe. We must know our target groups, and translate our message into concrete issues for today's society.

I hope that we will be able to encourage and stimulate each other here today

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so that we can fulfil our mission with conviction, serving both society and the Kingdom of our Lord.