

Economy boosts Dutch PM's election chances

Buoyed by the Netherlands' highest economic growth in five years, prime minister Jan Peter Balkenende seems likely to retain power when voters go to the polls on November 22, despite the resignation of two of his three governments in four years



CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS
Jan Peter Balkenende, 50



KEY ECONOMIC PROPOSALS

Labour – PARTIJ VAN DE ARBEID
Wouter Bos, 43



- Pay off EUR 6.5 billion of state debt by 2011

- Cut state debt from current 50% of GDP to 15% over 25 years

- Keep more people working until 65, create opportunities for people who want to work longer

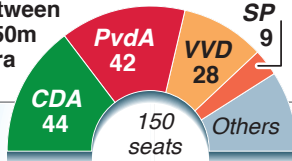
Parliament

Jan 2003-Jun 2006

- From 2011, all pensioners born after 1946 to contribute to state pension system

- Spend EUR 400m between 2008-11 on housing, 550m on child care, plus extra allowances for health

- Invest EUR 500m in education, innovation



- EUR 2.3bn to provide 3 days/wk of free child care for each child of working parents

- Increase of up to 10% in teachers' salaries



VVD: *Right-leaning liberal party and CDA partner in minority administration after collapse of second Balkenende government in June*

SOCIALIST PARTY

Hard-left party considered to be potential coalition partner for Labour together with Green Left



Other parties include **GroenLinks** (Green Left party), **D66** (centrist party which walked out of Balkenende's coalition, triggering election), and **Geert Wilders** (anti-immigration one-man party given up to 10 seats by opinion polls)