



## The Plenary of the German Bundestag

Das Plenum des Bundestages – Informationen in englischer Sprache



### The Members of the Bundestag

The 736 Members of the Bundestag are representatives of the whole people. They are elected in general, direct, free, equal and secret elections. Under the Basic Law (Germany's constitution), they are not bound by orders or instructions, and are responsible only to their conscience.

#### Rights and responsibilities

The parliamentarians' most important tasks include taking decisions on laws, electing the Federal Chancellor, and scrutinising the work of the Federal Government. They have various parliamentary rights for this purpose: they can speak in plenary debates, vote, table motions, and pose questions to the Federal Government, which is required to answer them. All Members of the Bundestag cast their votes personally. Members also have to comply with a code of conduct. They are required to enter their names personally in the attendance registers and take part in recorded votes. Outside paid interests have to be reported to the President of the Bundestag and published.

#### Remuneration

Members of the Bundestag receive remuneration to allow them to carry out their work. This taxable monthly remuneration is based on the amount received by a judge at a federal court. Members are also entitled to allowances, and receive a tax-free monthly expense allowance for costs incurred in connection with their parliamentary mandate. The monthly remuneration is adjusted each year on 1 July, based on the average rise in nominal wages calculated by the Federal Statistical Office.

### The parliamentary groups

The relative sizes of the parliamentary groups reflect the results of the Bundestag election. A parliamentary group can be formed by five per cent or more of the Members of the Bundestag who belong to the same party or to parties which do not compete with each other in any *Land* (federal state) because they have similar political aims.

#### Parliamentary groups in Parliament's work

Parliamentary groups play a key role in Parliament's work. They pave the way for the Bundestag's decisions. For example, draft legislation can be tabled by a parliamentary group. The groups also have the right to put questions to the Federal Government, for example in the form of major and minor interpellations.

#### Parliamentary groups in the 20th German Bundestag

In the 20th electoral term, there are six parliamentary groups in the Bundestag: SPD (206 seats), CDU/CSU (197 seats), Alliance 90/The Greens (118 seats), FDP (92 seats), AfD (78 seats) and the Left Party (39 seats). There are also six non-attached Members, who do not belong to any parliamentary group. The Members are seated in the plenary chamber by parliamentary group, from right (AfD) to left (The Left Party), from the perspective of the President of the Bundestag. There is no seating order within the parliamentary groups. Only the group's executive committee and Parliamentary Secretaries have designated seats in the front rows.

#### Speaking time

### Fixed rules in the plenary

Parliament follows fixed rules, which are laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag. For example, the rules list the Members' functions, rights and responsibilities, and set out the procedures for plenary sittings.

They also cover the allocation of speaking time to the parliamentary groups and the various types of vote in the plenary. The number of Members allowed to speak in a debate depends on the size of the parliamentary group: the larger the group, the greater the amount of speaking time to which it is entitled, meaning that more of its parliamentarians can speak in a debate. The number of minutes of speaking time available to each group is based on a fixed formula, which is agreed at the start of each electoral term. Within this framework, the groups themselves decide which of their members will speak for how long on a given topic. Members who do not belong to a parliamentary group are allocated speaking time separately. The President in the Chair ensures that the rules on speaking time are upheld. Under the Basic Law, the members of the Federal Government and the Bundesrat are not subject to any limits on their right to speak, in principle. They are allowed to speak in the plenary at any time. In practice, however, their speaking time counts towards the speaking time of the groups which support the government, out of fairness to the opposition. Government policy statements are an exception where this rule does not apply.

#### Types of vote

If the Bundestag wants to take a decision, it requires a majority of the votes cast, unless the Basic Law (the German constitution) states otherwise. There are various types of vote.

*Vote by a show of hands:* Members usually vote by raising their hands.

*Vote by standing:* When draft legislation receives its third reading, Members are asked to stand to show that they agree to the bill, reject it, or wish to abstain.

*Hammelsprung:* If the Chair does not agree on the result of a vote, the vote can be repeated in the form of a procedure known as a *Hammelsprung*. The Members leave the chamber and re-enter it via one of the doors marked 'Yes', 'No' or 'Abstention'. They are counted at the doors by Members acting as Secretaries.

*Recorded vote:* A recorded vote is held if demanded by a parliamentary group or five per cent of the Members. The Members place colour-coded voting cards bearing their name and parliamentary group into ballot boxes. Blue cards mean 'Yes', red means 'No', and white means 'Abstention'.

*Secret ballot:* In a secret ballot, the Members mark their ballot paper in a booth, put it in an envelope and place it in a ballot box. The Federal Chancellor and the Federal President, among others, are elected by secret ballot.

### Transparent Parliament

The German Bundestag's sittings are public, as stipulated by the Basic Law. The plenary chamber therefore has three galleries for the press and media, which can report freely from the plenary chamber.

#### Plenary debates live

Anyone who is unable to be in the plenary chamber when the Members hold sittings in Berlin can follow the plenary debates on the Bundestag's website. All plenary debates, public committee meetings and hearings are broadcast on the website live, without commentary and in full. The website's media centre contains all videos produced since the start of the 17th electoral term in 2009. All plenary sittings and public committee meetings can be viewed here or downloaded. Older videos are available in the video archive.

#### Bundestag app

Even when you are on the move, the 'Deutscher Bundestag' app can be used to access information on smartphones or tablets. Ongoing debates can be followed live via the audio and video stream in the app.

#### The Bundestag online

The Bundestag's website at [www.bundestag.de](http://www.bundestag.de) also enables you to order information materials, access Bundestag printed papers and the minutes of plenary sittings, and download the text of laws. A website for children is available at [kuppelkucker.de](http://kuppelkucker.de), and young people can find information about the Bundestag at [mitmischen.de](http://mitmischen.de).



Website for downloading and ordering the Public Relations Division's information materials [www.btg-bestellservice.de](http://www.btg-bestellservice.de)

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# The 20th German Bundestag

## The President of the Bundestag and the Vice-Presidents

-  Bärbel Bas  
SPD
-  Aydan Özoğuz  
SPD
-  Yvonne Magwas  
CDU/CSU
-  Katrin Göring-Eckardt  
Alliance 90/  
The Greens
-  Wolfgang Kubicki  
FDP
-  Petra Pau  
The Left Party

## Parliamentary-group chairpersons

-  Rolf Mützenich  
SPD
-  Friedrich Merz  
CDU/CSU
-  Katharina Dröge  
Alliance 90/  
The Greens
-  Britta Habelmann  
Alliance 90/  
The Greens
-  Christian Dürr  
FDP
-  Amira Mohamed Ali  
The Left Party
-  Dr Dietmar Bartsch  
The Left Party
-  Tino Chrupalla  
AfD
-  Dr Alice Weidel  
AfD

- 1** The President of the Bundestag or the Vice-Presidents chair the plenary sittings in rotation, each presiding for two hours at a time.
- 2** The Chair consists of the President in the Chair and two Members who act as Secretaries.

- 3** The plenary assistants support the President in the Chair on technical matters, for example by setting the timer for speaking time and preparing the rostrum.
- 4** The Secretary-General of the German Bundestag and the plenary support service assist the President in the Chair on substantive issues, such as the Rules of Procedure.

- 5** The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces assists the Bundestag in overseeing the armed forces, and reports to the Bundestag at regular intervals.

- 6** Two members of the Shorthand Writers' Service transcribe the Members' speeches. One is relieved after 5 minutes, the other after 30.

- 7** Cameras broadcast the plenary debates live on Parliamentary Television. An 'F' next to the time signals that the cameras are on.
- 8** Two screens display the current agenda item, the speakers, and the next item on the agenda.

- 9** Rostrum
- 10** Microphones for questions to speakers

- ### Federal Government
- 1** Federal Chancellor  
Olaf Scholz, SPD
  - Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action and Deputy Federal Chancellor  
Dr Robert Habeck,  
Alliance 90/The Greens
  - Federal Minister of Finance  
Christian Lindner, FDP
  - Federal Minister of the Interior and Community  
Nancy Faeser, SPD
  - Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Annalena Baerbock,  
Alliance 90/The Greens
  - Federal Minister of Justice  
Dr Marco Buschmann, FDP
  - Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs  
Hubertus Heil, SPD
  - Federal Minister of Defence  
Boris Pistorius, SPD
  - Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture  
Cem Özdemir,  
Alliance 90/The Greens
  - Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth  
Lisa Paus,  
Alliance 90/The Greens
  - Federal Minister of Health  
Professor Karl Lauterbach, SPD
  - Federal Minister for Digital and Transport  
Dr Volker Wissing, FDP
  - Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection  
Steffi Lemke,  
Alliance 90/The Greens
  - Federal Minister of Education and Research  
Bettina Stark-Watzinger, FDP
  - Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development  
Svenja Schulze, SPD
  - Federal Minister for Housing, Urban Development and Building  
Klara Geywitz, SPD
  - Head of the Federal Chancellery and Federal Minister for Special Tasks  
Wolfgang Schmidt, SPD
  - Ministers of State at the Federal Chancellery
  - Government spokesman  
Steffen Hebestreit
  - Parliamentary State Secretaries

- ### Bundesrat
- 2** President of the Bundesrat (post rotates annually)
- (Last updated: May 2023)



**736 seats total**

**AfD**  
78 seats

**Non-attached Members**  
5 out of 6 seats

**CDU/CSU**  
197 seats

**FDP**  
92 seats

**Alliance 90/The Greens**  
118 seats

**SPD**  
206 seats

**The Left Party**  
39 seats