



Deutscher Bundestag

## The Petitions Committee

Petitionsausschuss

Informationen in englischer Sprache



New  
**2023**  
version  
20th electoral term



“Since the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Petitions Committee has been the bridge between the Bundestag and its sovereign, the people. It gives the public a way to contact the German Parliament with requests, complaints and suggestions. Whether a petition is submitted online or as a letter, as a public petition or an individual submission – the Committee carefully examines all the requests and complaints it receives. This is ensured by the parliamentarians and by the Committee’s staff.”



Martina Stamm-Fibich, SPD  
Chairwoman of  
the Petitions Committee

The German Bundestag's decisions are prepared by its committees, which are established at the start of each electoral term. Four of them are stipulated by the Basic Law, the German constitution: the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Defence Committee, the Committee on European Union Affairs and the Petitions Committee.

The Budget Committee and the Committee for the Scrutiny of Elections, Immunity and the Rules of Procedure are also required by law. The spheres of responsibility of the committees essentially reflect the Federal Government's distribution of ministerial portfolios. This enables Parliament to scrutinise the government's work effectively.

## **The committees of the German Bundestag**

The German Bundestag sets political priorities of its own by establishing additional committees for specific subjects, such as sport, cultural affairs, human rights or tourism. In addition, special bodies such as parliamentary advisory councils, committees of inquiry or study commissions can also be established. The committees are composed of members of all the parliamentary groups, reflecting the balance of these groups in the German Bundestag. The distribution of the chairs and deputy chairs among the parliamentary groups also reflects their relative strengths in the plenary. In the current electoral term, the committees have between 19 and 49 members.

The committees discuss and deliberate on items referred to them by the plenary. They also have the right to take up issues on their own initiative, allowing them to set priorities in the parliamentary debate. When necessary, they draw on external expertise – usually by holding public hearings. At the end of a committee's deliberations – especially on bills and motions for which it is the lead committee – it adopts a recommendation for a decision and a report, which serve as the basis for the plenary's decision.

The Petitions Committee is the central point of contact at the German Bundestag for anyone who wishes to raise their concerns, draw attention to hardships or make suggestions. It can intervene in a mediating role when people have problems with federal authorities or other institutions subject to federal supervision. The Committee's outstanding importance is reflected in the Basic Law – for the right of petition enshrined in Article 17 has been an immutable fundamental right since 1949: “Every person shall have the right individually or jointly with others to address written requests or complaints to competent authorities and to the legislature.”

## **The Petitions Committee – serving the public**

Anybody can make use of the right of petition: adults and minors, Germans and people from other countries – even if they do not live in Germany. Members of the armed forces have the additional option of contacting the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces with their concerns. People can address the Petitions Committee on their own behalf, for third parties or in the general interest. The German Bundestag’s Petitions Committee handles all petitions which deal with legislative functions at federal level or contain complaints about federal authorities. It forwards other submissions to the competent bodies, such as the parliaments of the *Länder* (federal states). The Petitions Committee is supported in its work by the staff of the Committee Service.

Petitioners can contact the Petitions Committee to request help when facing personal hardship, for example if their pension is not granted, if funding is needed for aids or assistive devices, or when it comes to the calculation of parental allowance or assistance for students and trainees. Unfortunately, there are always cases where members of the public are mired in bureaucracy, for example because of misunderstandings on the part of the authorities, and need help to resolve the situation. The state’s actions are ultimately carried out by

- 9  SPD
- 8  CDU/CSU
- 5  Alliance 90/The Greens
- 4  FDP
- 3  AfD
- 2  The Left Party

Number of members: 31

Chairwoman: Martina Stamm-Fibich, SPD

Deputy Chairman: Bernhard Loos, CDU/CSU

people, after all – and people can make mistakes. The Petitions Committee is a corrective mechanism of sorts which takes action when members of the public contact Parliament with requests or complaints or to draw attention to failings. The right of petition provides a direct means of contacting Parliament – and this has several consequences: firstly, people can complain about specific administrative acts and draw attention to failings; secondly, people can submit suggestions for legislation. Petitions give Parliament important information about the implementation of laws and indicate where there is a need to take action. They act as a political seismograph, providing a picture of the public mood.

### **Published petitions**

Petitions can also be submitted electronically, and it is possible for these petitions to be published on the Petitions Committee’s website. For four weeks from the time of publication, all registered users of the website can comment and set out their own views on the subject in question in dedicated forums, and thus play an active part in the political



opinion-forming process. The petition can also be signed online during this period, as an expression of support for its substance. The petitioner therefore does not need to painstakingly collect signatures, as is the case for traditional collective petitions. People who gain 50,000 supporters for their petition within four weeks are invited to present their request or complaint to the Members of Parliament in person at a public meeting of the Petitions Committee.

### **The petitions process**

All requests for federal legislation and complaints about the work of federal authorities are examined by Parliament. Every submission is treated equally by the Petitions Committee – no matter whether it concerns a single individual with a personal problem, or a headline-grabbing campaign with many tens of thousands of committed supporters.



To ensure that everyone can make use of the right of petition without problems, there are only a few criteria which have to be met. The petition must be sent in writing by post or fax, and must be legible and include a signature, or alternatively it must be submitted using the online form on the Petitions Committee's website. Anonymous or insulting submissions are not dealt with by the Petitions Committee.

After compliance with these formal criteria has been checked, the petitioner receives confirmation that the petition has been received. The relevant federal ministry or federal supervisory authority is then asked to provide a statement on the petitioner's request. As the authorities subsequently examine whether they have exhausted all options open to them, petitions are often already successful at this stage of the process. If this is not the case, what normally follows is the "rapporteur procedure": the petition is examined by at



least two Members of Parliament, one from the governing coalition and one from the opposition. In addition, the Committee can invite experts for talks, inspect files, or carry out on-site visits to gain a first-hand impression of the situation. It can also invite state secretaries or the ministers themselves to attend its meetings to answer questions on difficult cases.

Finally, the Petitions Committee discusses the petition and adopts a recommendation, on which the German Bundestag as a whole then takes a decision. If the petition is concluded to be justified in whole or in part, the German Bundestag takes a decision to this effect on the Petitions Committee's recommendation, and this decision is transmitted to the Federal Government. A range of different decisions can be taken, varying in scope, to call on the Federal Government to take action in response to the petition. Petitioners are finally informed about the outcome of the deliberations on their petitions.







Martina Stamm-Fibich,  
SPD  
Chairwoman  
Marketing and  
communication  
manager, works council  
member,  
b. 23 Apr. 1965  
in Erlangen.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



Bernhard Loos,  
CDU/CSU,  
Deputy Chairman  
Honorary executive,  
b. 30 July 1955  
in Kaufbeuren.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2017



## Committee members

The 31 members of the Petitions Committee

Axel Echeverria,  
SPD  
Parliamentary-group  
coordinator  
Employee,  
b. 19 Mar. 1980  
in Witten.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Andreas Mattfeldt,  
CDU/CSU  
Parliamentary-policy  
spokesman  
Industrial clerk, mayor,  
b. 28 Sep. 1969  
in Verden (Aller).  
Bundestag Member  
since 2009



Corinna Ruffer  
Alliance 90/The Greens  
Parliamentary-group  
coordinator  
Politician,  
b. 11 Oct. 1975  
in Osnabrück.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



Manfred Todtenhausen,  
FDP  
Parliamentary-group  
coordinator  
Master electrician,  
b. 8 Dec. 1950  
in Wuppertal.  
Bundestag Member  
from 2012 to 2013 and  
since 2017



Dirk Brandes,  
AfD  
Parliamentary-group  
coordinator  
Public-sector employee,  
b. 25 May 1974  
in Langenhagen.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Sören Pellmann,  
The Left Party  
Parliamentary-group  
coordinator  
Primary school and  
special needs teacher,  
b. 11 Feb. 1977  
in Leipzig.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2017



Bengt Bergt,  
SPD  
Works council  
chairman, technical  
translator and author,  
b. 7 May 1982  
in Luckenwalde.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Annika Klose,  
SPD  
Social scientist,  
b. 24 June 1992  
in Dortmund.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Martin Kröber,  
SPD  
Branch manager,  
b. 12 Feb. 1992  
in Halberstadt.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Erik von Malottki,  
SPD  
Trade unionist,  
b. 1 Apr. 1986  
in Grevesmühlen.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Takis Mehmet Ali,  
SPD  
Head of administration  
and social matters,  
b. 17 June 1991  
in Oberhausen.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Udo Schiefner,  
SPD  
Quality assurance  
technician,  
b. 7 Aug. 1959  
in Kempen.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



Ruppert Stüwe,  
SPD  
Economist,  
b. 21 May 1978  
in Berlin.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Melanie Bernstein,  
CDU/CSU  
Cultural scientist,  
executive director,  
b. 28 Sep. 1976  
in Buchholz in der  
Nordheide.  
Bundestag Member  
from 2017 to 2021 and  
since 2023



Simone Borchardt,  
CDU/CSU  
Care division manager,  
b. 11 Sep. 1967  
in Schkeuditz.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Dr Marlon Bröhr,  
CDU/CSU  
District commissioner,  
b. 3 Apr. 1974  
in Geilenkirchen.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Yannick Bury,  
CDU/CSU  
Economist,  
b. 11 Mar. 1990  
in Herbolzheim.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Martina Englhardt-Kopf,  
CDU/CSU  
Senior academic  
secondary school  
teacher,  
b. 8 June 1981  
in Schwandorf.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Sabine Weiss,  
CDU/CSU  
CDU/CSU group  
coordinator

Lawyer, former mayor,  
former Parliamentary  
State Secretary,  
b. 26 May 1958  
in Duisburg-Hamborn.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2009



Lukas Benner,  
Alliance 90/The Greens  
Lawyer,  
b. 20 Feb. 1996  
in Aachen.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Swantje Henrike  
Michaelson,  
Alliance 90/The Greens  
Branch manager,  
b. 4 Oct. 1979 in Mainz.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Beate Müller-Gemmeke,  
Alliance 90/The Greens  
Youth and community  
worker,  
b. 7 Oct. 1960  
in Frankfurt am Main.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2009



Beate Walter-  
Rosenheimer,  
Alliance 90/The Greens  
Psychologist,  
b. 20 Nov. 1964 in  
Weißenburg (Bavaria).  
Bundestag Member  
since 2012



Valentin Christian Abel,  
FDP  
Sales analyst,  
b. 7 Feb. 1991  
in Künzelsau.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Ingo Bodtke,  
FDP  
Meat industry  
specialist,  
b. 6 June 1965  
in Eisleben.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Reginald Hanke,  
FDP  
Painter,  
b. 25 Aug. 1956  
in Schwerin.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2019



Gereon Bollmann,  
AfD  
Former Higher  
Regional Court judge,  
b. 20 Nov. 1953  
in Au im Murgtal.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



Ina Latendorf,  
The Left Party  
Lawyer,  
b. 26 June 1971  
in Greifswald.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2021



## Information online

The German Bundestag's Petitions Committee  
[www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a02](http://www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a02)



Submit petitions online, and sign or discuss public petitions  
[epetitionen.bundestag.de](http://epetitionen.bundestag.de)



The Petitions Committee's public meetings  
[www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse/a02\\_Petitionsausschuss/anhoerungen\\_inhalt-869280](http://www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse/a02_Petitionsausschuss/anhoerungen_inhalt-869280)



The European Parliament's Committee on Petitions  
[www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/peti/home.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/peti/home.html)



The European Ombudsman  
[www.ombudsman.europa.eu/home.faces](http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/home.faces)



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



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Article 17 of the Basic Law

[www.bundestag.de/en/committees](http://www.bundestag.de/en/committees)



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[www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a02](http://www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a02)



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