The Petitions Committee
“Since 1949, the Petitions Committee has been the central point of contact at the Bundestag for anyone in the Federal Republic of Germany who wishes to raise their concerns, draw attention to hardships or make suggestions. The Committee has moved with the times, offering the option to submit online and public petitions, and is responsive to public needs. Petitions received by the German Bundestag’s Petitions Committee benefit from a threefold guarantee: the Committee must accept, examine and take a decision on them. That is required by the constitution.”

Marian Wendt, CDU/CSU
Chairman 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 the Affairs of the European Union and the Petitions Committee. The Budget Committee and the Committee for 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 Bundestag committees
The German Bundestag sets political priorities of its own by establishing additional committees for specific subjects, such as sport, cultural affairs 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 nine 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, a majority of its members adopt 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 derives from 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 Petitions Committee deals with all petitions which relate to the German Bundestag’s legislative functions or make 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 or if funding is needed for a wheelchair. 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 are unable to secure that to which they are entitled without help. The state’s actions are ultimately carried out by people, after all – and people can make mistakes. The Petitions Committee is a corrective mechanism.

9 ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ CDU/CSU
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3 ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ FDP
3 ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ The Left Party
3 ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ Alliance 90/The Greens

Number of members: 28
Chairman: Marian Wendt, CDU/CSU
Deputy Chairwoman: Martina Stamm-Fibich, SPD
Published petitions

The right of petition enshrined in the Basic Law has evolved to keep up with the times. Since 2005, it has also been possible to submit petitions electronically. Such petitions can also 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 using pen
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 vocal supporters.

and paper, 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.
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 successful at this stage of the process. If this is not the case, what normally follows is the “rapporteur procedure”: the petition file, together with a reasoned recommendation for a decision, is examined by at least two Members of Parliament, one from a governing parliamentary group and one from an opposition parliamentary group.

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 to the Committee 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. Petitioners must give their address so they can be contacted. Anonymous or insulting submissions are not dealt with by the Petitions Committee.
For further clarification of the matter, 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 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.
Committee members

The 28 members of the Petitions Committee

Marian Wendt, CDU/CSU
Chairman
Public administration specialist, b. 9 June 1985 in Torgau; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2013

Martina Stamm-Fibich, SPD
Deputy Chairwoman
Marketing and communications manager, works council member, b. 23 Apr. 1965 in Erlangen; divorced; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013
Marc Biadacz, CDU/CSU
Social scientist, b. 3 Sep. 1979 in Böblingen; married. Bundestag Member since 2017

Marc Henrichmann, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 1 June 1976 in Münster; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2017

Jens Lehmann, CDU/CSU
Olympic cycling champion, b. 19 Dec. 1967 in Stolberg, Harz; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Paul Lehrieder, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 20 Nov. 1959 in Ochsenfurt; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2005

Bernhard Loos, CDU/CSU
Economist, political scientist, b. 30 July 1955 in Kaufbeuren; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Andreas Mattfeldt, CDU/CSU
Industrial clerk, b. 28 Sep. 1969 in Verden (Aller); married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2009

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Jens Lehmann, CDU/CSU
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Ralf Kapschack, 
SPD 
Journalist, 
b. 24 Dec. 1954 
in Witten; 
marrried; two children. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2013

Siemtje Möller, 
SPD 
Teacher, 
b. 20 July 1983 
in Emden; 
unmarried; two children. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2017

Josif Oster, 
CDU/CSU 
Public administration specialist, 
b. 4 Jan. 1971 
in Zell (Mosel); 
Bundestag Member since 2013

Gero Storjohann, 
CDU/CSU petitions spokesman 
Business administrator, 
b. 12 Feb. 1958 
in Bad Segeberg; married; three children. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Timon Gremmels, 
SPD 
Political scientist, 
b. 4 Jan. 1976 
in Marburg; 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Udo Schiefner, 
SPD 
Quality assurance technician, 
b. 7 Aug. 1959 
in Kempen; married; one child. 
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Detlev Spangenberg, AfD
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Wolfgang Wiehle, AfD
IT specialist, b. 20 Oct. 1964 in Munich; divorced; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Hartmut Ebbing, FDP
Auditor, tax adviser, b. 13 May 1956 in Berlin; unmarried; three children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Stefan Schwartze, SPD
SPD spokesman on the Committee
Industrial mechanic, b. 23 May 1974 in Bad Oeynhausen; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2009

Martin Hebner, AfD
IT consultant, b. 10 Nov. 1959 in Frankfurt am Main; married; four children. Bundestag Member since 2017

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Master electrician,
b. 8 Dec. 1950
in Wuppertal;
mixed; one child.
Bundestag Member
from 2012 to 2013
and since 2017

Gerald Ullrich,
FDP
Engineer,
b. 23 Dec. 1962
in Schmalkalden;
mixed;
two children.
Bundestag Member
since 2017

Sören Pellmann,
The Left Party
Primary school and
special needs teacher,
b. 11 Feb. 1977
in Leipzig;
mixed.
Bundestag Member
since 2017

Kersten Steinke,
The Left Party
Agricultural specialist,
b. 7 Dec. 1958
in Bad Frankenhausen,
Thuringia;
mixed; two children.
Bundestag Member
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mixed; two children.
Bundestag Member
since 2009
Corinna Rüffer, 
Alliance 90/The Greens 
Alliance 90/The Greens 
spokeswoman on the Committee 
Politician, 
b. 11 Oct. 1975 
in Osnabrück; 
unmarried; one child. 
Bundestag Member since 2013

Daniela Wagner, 
Alliance 90/The Greens 
Former city councilor, 
b. 4 Apr. 1957 
in Darmstadt; 
marrried; one child. 
Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017
Information online

The German Bundestag’s Petitions Committee
www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a02

Submit petitions online, and sign or discuss public petitions
epetitionen.bundestag.de

The Petitions Committee’s public meetings
www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse/a02/
anhoerungen_inhalt/547292

The European Parliament’s Committee on Petitions

The European Ombudsman
www.ombudsman.europa.eu
Contact details for the Committee Secretariat

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Petitionsausschuss
Platz der Republik 1
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“Every person shall have the right individually or jointly with others to address written requests or complaints to competent authorities and to the legislature.”

Article 17 of the Basic Law