



Deutscher Bundestag

# **The Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment**

Ausschuss für Bildung, Forschung und  
Technikfolgenabschätzung  
Informationen in englischer Sprache

**New  
2023  
version**  
20th electoral term





“We are the committee responsible for shaping the future, equal opportunities, the drive to innovate, confidence in research, and scientific freedom worldwide. A person’s background must not be allowed to determine their future. Education empowers tomorrow’s skilled workers. Education and research are sources of sustainable prosperity and climate-friendly economic activity. We want to dare more progress and innovation, and we want a strong research sector. Technology, tolerance, talent, European and international cooperation, and an openness to new ideas: these are our hallmarks as a modern country of innovation.”



Kai Gehring, Alliance 90/The Greens  
Chairman of the Committee on  
Education, Research and Technology  
Assessment

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.

## **Fields of work, competences and tasks**

Education and research – these are the policy fields which give the Committee its name. Technology assessment is also a key topic for the Committee. Its 38 members help to create a good framework for education and lifelong learning in Germany, as these play an important role in enabling everyone to participate actively, independently and successfully in the life of the community in Germany. The Committee also deals with the question of how to boost basic research and foster sustainable innovation by the academic and research community. These make a major contribution to prosperity, social security and environmental compatibility in Germany, which has few natural resources.

# **The Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment**

The Committee is responsible within Parliament for the areas of policy which fall within the purview of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. In line with the federal principle which underpins how Germany is governed, the Basic Law divides the responsibility and competences for education, academia and research between the federal level and the Länder (federal states). For example, responsibility for schools and higher education rests with the Länder rather than the federal level. The Federation, and thus the Committee, is responsible for legislation on financial support for vocational training and higher education (assistance provided under the Federal Training Assistance Act and the Upgrading Training Assistance Act, and organisations for the promotion of the gifted) and legislation on initial and continuing training provided outside of schools.

It is also responsible for promoting academia and research. The Federation supports education, academia and research through a wide range of specialised funding programmes, which are presented and discussed in the Committee. The federal level and the Länder cooperate directly in the framework of joint programmes to support academia, research and teaching. Such measures aim, for example, to secure and boost the number of university places, or to support higher education teaching and excellent academic research at universities, universities of applied sciences and non-university research institutes, as well as to support socially disadvantaged school pupils, and to drive forward digitalisation in the education system.

- 11  SPD
- 10  CDU/CSU
- 6  Alliance 90 / The Greens
- 5  FDP
- 4  AfD
- 2  The Left Party

Number of members: 38

Chairman: Kai Gehring, Alliance 90/The Greens

Deputy Chairwoman: Dr Petra Sitte, The Left Party

On issues from equal opportunities to innovation policy, there is a need for close, targeted and binding cooperation between all levels. The Committee will focus on better starting opportunities in disadvantaged schools, as well as a “Digital Pact 2.0” and fundamental reforms to the assistance provided under the Federal Training Assistance Act. Each year, the Committee members are also asked for their opinion in the budget deliberations, to secure appropriate funding in the federal budget to support education, academia and research, and to ensure that the funding is used in a manner that is as effective, innovative and forward-looking as possible.

### **Working with various roles: the government, the coalition and the opposition**

When considering matters and taking decisions, the Committee reflects the balance of forces in the Bundestag’s plenary. While the coalition parliamentary groups generally support or refine the Federal Government’s policies, the opposition parliamentary groups try to identify weak points and set out their alternative policies. That said, the parliamentary groups do take a differentiated approach, and so sometimes there is agreement from all sides on the Committee, resulting in unanimous decisions. Members of the government are held to account by the Committee on a continuous basis. The Federal Government has specific obligations to report to Parliament and the Committee. For example, there are discussions on the National Edu-



cation Report, the report published under Section 35 of the Federal Training Assistance Act and the Federal Report on Research and Innovation every two years, and on the Report on Vocational Education and Training every year, usually flanked by motions or bills tabled by the parliamentary groups.

### **Challenges in education and academia**

Child day care centres and schools have the task of offering children a good education from their earliest years and promoting equal opportunities. Policy-makers must establish a framework to facilitate this. In the current electoral term, the Committee will deal with a raft of measures to this end, including initiatives to strengthen early childhood education and to expand all-

day schools and childcare services. Another item on the Committee's agenda is strengthening initial and continuing training. Germany's youth unemployment rate, at around six per cent, is currently the lowest in the EU. Nonetheless, it is important to strengthen the dual system of vocational training and improve the transition from school to vocational education and training. Universities and universities of applied sciences are exemplary centres for both teaching and research, and are at the heart of Germany's research landscape. The Excellence Strategy, the Future Contract for Strengthening Studying and Teaching in Higher Education, and the federal programme "Innovative Hochschule" are initiatives to boost cutting-edge research and to expand innovative teaching and digital infrastructure. The parliamentary groups on the Committee take a critical but constructive approach as they examine these programmes.



## Challenges in research and innovation

In every electoral term, the Committee holds talks with the heads of the major research institutes and associations. This enables the Committee members to get an idea of their research priorities and their staffing and funding levels. The proportion of general government spending on research and development is planned to rise to 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product by 2025. The Committee's agenda will focus, besides financing issues, on the establishment of the German Agency for Transfer and Innovation (DATI) and the evaluation of the Pact for Research and Innovation (PFI). Other key topics include improving access to research data, more reliable and fair working conditions in the academic sector, and research communication and participation.

## Technology assessment: scientific policy advice for the German Bundestag

The German Bundestag has assigned the Committee the responsibility for planning and managing technology assessments, and the Committee carries out these tasks on behalf of Parliament as a whole in accordance with Rule 56a of the Bundestag's Rules of Procedure. Analysing scientific and technical developments in a comprehensive and forward-looking manner and drawing attention to the social, economic and environmental opportunities and risks – these are the main functions of technology



assessment. The scientists at the Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag are independent in both political and academic terms, and work directly for Parliament. The Office of Technology Assessment is currently run by the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in cooperation with the Institute for Futures Studies and Technology Assessment (IZT) and VDI/VDE Innovation und Technik GmbH. The results of its analyses and studies serve as background information for the Members of the Bundestag and Parliament's bodies in their work and in deliberations on complex scientific and technological issues and challenges. The final reports are usually published as Bundestag printed papers and thus formally enter the parliamentary deliberations.

To date, the Office of Technology Assessment has submitted more than 200 reports on a wide range of topics, covering the fields of biotechnology and health, the digital society and economy, energy and the environment, infrastructure and security, agriculture and food. In the current electoral term, the Office of Technology Assessment will be presenting reports on subjects such as artificial intelligence in education, natural forest conversion in the era of climate change, and bacteriophages in medicine, agriculture and food production, to give just a few examples of the wide-ranging requests for advice submitted by the parliamentary groups and committees.



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The Committee on Education, Research  
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[www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a18](http://www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a18)



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



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The German Bundestag takes decisions on what are at times highly complex and controversial bills and parliamentary initiatives relating to the entire spectrum of policy fields. The committees play a central role in parliamentary deliberations. They are the forum where the Members thrash out compromises and draw on expert advice before submitting their reports and recommendations for decisions to be voted on by the Bundestag as a whole.

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



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