



Deutscher Bundestag

The Committee on Labour and Social Affairs

Ausschuss für Arbeit und Soziales
Informationen in englischer Sprache



**New
2023
version**
20th electoral term



“Welcome to the Committee on Labour and Social Affairs. We are the German Bundestag’s largest committee. The issues we deal with directly affect most of the people in our country. How do we create decent working conditions for all employees? How can we help people to upgrade their skills? How do we ensure that people’s wages enable them to live a good life? How do we help people who become unemployed? How can we help to enhance the participation of people with disabilities? How do we make sure that people receive a decent pension after a long working life? We need answers to these questions. Finding them is our job.”



Bernd Rützel, SPD
Chairman of the Committee
on Labour and Social Affairs

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.

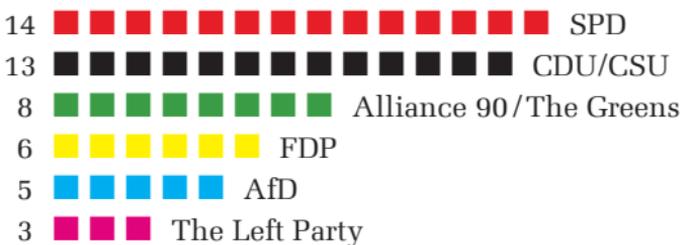
The committees discuss and deliberate on items referred to them by the plenary. They also have the right to take up issues on their own initiative, allowing them to set priorities in the parliamentary debate. When necessary, they draw on external expertise – usually by holding public hearings. At the 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.

Pensions policy, labour market policy, meeting future needs for skilled labour, and ensuring that everyone can participate in society – these are among the subjects discussed by the 49 members of the Committee on Labour and Social Affairs, chaired by Bernd Rützel (SPD). A large number of motions and bills on these issues are examined by the Committee. The topics it deals with range from pensions to labour market policy, from employment promotion to benefits for asylum seekers and issues relating to the digital transformation of the working world. In addition, the Committee engages with a large number of initiatives which seek to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to ensure the equal participation of people with disabilities.

The Committee on Labour and Social Affairs

The Committee has a heavy workload, as the policy field of labour and social affairs represents the biggest area of spending in the federal budget, at almost 165 billion euros in 2021 – around 40 per cent of the total budget. The relevant government department is the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, headed by Hubertus Heil (SPD). The Ministry’s work is supported and monitored by the Committee members, for example when new pension regulations are adopted, when labour market policy instruments are overhauled, or when it comes to strengthening the concept of inclusion in disability policy.

The main element of the Committee’s work is its consideration of bills and motions for which it has been designated the lead committee by the plenary of the German Bundestag. In these cases, it has the task of recommending what decision the plenary should take. Then there are other items where the Committee is asked to submit an opinion to the lead committee. The Rules of Procedure also allow the Committee’s members to take up issues falling within its remit on their own initiative. To this end, the Committee can, for example, request a report from the Federal Government with the aim of identifying developments in society at an



Number of members: 49
 Chairman: Bernd Rützel, SPD
 Deputy Chairman: Axel Knoerig, CDU/CSU

early stage. These reports are the subject of intensive discussion in the Committee, and can result in it submitting recommendations and calls for action to the Federal Government. In addition, the Committee ensures parliamentary scrutiny of the government's work by putting questions to members of the Federal Government. In general, a representative of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs attends the Committee's meetings, usually a Parliamentary State Secretary. That said, the Federal Minister can be asked to attend a Committee meeting in person, or may choose to attend to present initiatives from his portfolio himself.

Regulations on social policy or labour market policy affect millions of people, with the result that policy-makers face high expectations. The Committee therefore draws on external expertise when formulating recommendations, especially on contentious and complex subjects. When it comes to pension reforms, the battle to reduce poverty in old age, part-time work for older workers, protection against dismissal, occupational safety and health and issues relating to statutory accident insurance, or the situation of people with disabilities, the Committee consults and holds public hearings of experts from academia, interest groups and other institutions. Above all, the aim is to ensure that the voices of those affected are heard. These hearings are almost always public.



Ausschuss für Arbeit und Soziales

**Ausschussvorsitz E 241
Sekretariatsleitung E 242**

Items of business relating to European affairs are an important element of the Committee's deliberations. This is partly because the European Union helps to shape the labour and social standards of its Member States, and partly because there are political calls for social issues to be given a greater role in EU policy. The Committee members therefore request regular reports from the Federal Government so that they can influence EU decisions at an early stage. The "preview of European policy initiatives in the field of labour and social affairs" is one of the regular items on the Committee's agenda.



Pensions, the minimum wage and basic income support – the Committee’s work in practice

Social policy initiatives are subject to close public attention. Basic income support for jobseekers or new developments in the labour market regularly make headlines and inspire strong feelings. The deliberations in the Committee on Labour and Social Affairs take place at a decisive phase in the legislative process. This is where the plenary’s decisions to pass or reject a law are prepared.

Over the course of an electoral term, hundreds of bills, motions and interpellations are referred to the Committee. They are joined by reports from the Federal Government and items relating to public hearings. Each item of business requires intensive preparation and a great deal of expert knowledge.

After all, changes to social legislation have a major impact on the lives of many people. One example is maintaining the statutory pension. The questions examined by the Committee in this context include how the pension level and the pension contribution rate can be stabilised in the long term. Then there are issues such as the need for continuing training and rehabilitation for a growing number of older workers. Other priorities in the Committee’s deliberations in this electoral term are likely to relate to



replacing basic income support with a citizen's minimum income, and making further progress regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities. The parliamentarians are also grappling with the challenges posed by the digital transformation of the working world (Work 4.0) and with questions regarding remote working. In addition, the Committee is responsible for issues such as unemployment benefit and social assistance – and for the question of how policy-makers can help unemployed people return to the labour market. Finally, the European Union's labour and social standards are also the subject of numerous items of business for the Committee.

For example, the Committee's members discuss issues relating to the posting of workers in the European Union. What standards have to be safeguarded, what protection do workers need, and what requirements are set by employers? Should there be a European Labour Authority to ensure better coordination in future? The question of how to make progress towards achieving the aim of equal pay for men and women is also among the many issues on the Committee's agenda. Social-security agreements with other countries also have to be transposed into national law. The Committee's work affects everyone, whether young or old, in work or retired, male or female, self-employed or unemployed.







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SPD
Chairman
Former technical
officer,
b. 2 Oct. 1968 in
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Bundestag Member
since 2013



Axel Knoerig,
CDU/CSU
Deputy Chairman
Marketing specialist,
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Bundestag Member
since 2009



Committee members

The 49 members of the Committee on Labour
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Dr Wolfgang Streng-
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Jens Beeck,
FDP
Parliamentary-group
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Lawyer,
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Münster.
Bundestag Member
since 2017



Gerrit Huy,
AfD
Parliamentary-group
coordinator
Pensioner,
b. 13 May 1953 in
Braunschweig.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Matthias W. Birkwald,
The Left Party
Parliamentary-group
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Social scientist,
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Bundestag Member
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Jan Dieren,
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Moers.
Bundestag Member
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Manuel Gava,
SPD
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Pieve di Cadore (Italy).
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Michael Gerdes,
SPD
Mining electrician,
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Bundestag Member
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Angelika Glöckner,
SPD
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Bundestag Member
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Dr Tanja Machalet,
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Bundestag Member
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Kaweh Mansoori,
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Takis Mehmet Ali,
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Rasha Nasr,
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Bundestag Member
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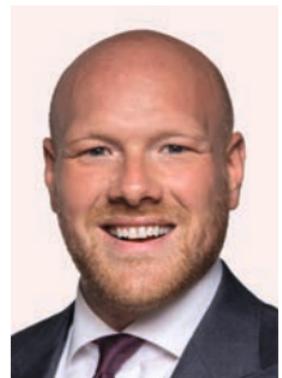
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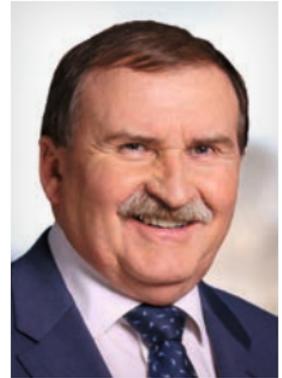
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Bundestag Member
since 2017





Information online

The Committee on Labour and Social Affairs
www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a11



Meeting agendas of the Committee on Labour
and Social Affairs
www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse/a11_arbeit_soziales/tagesordnungen



The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
www.bmas.de



Parliamentary Television
www.bundestag.de/parlamentsfernsehen



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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



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