The Committee on Labour and Social Affairs
“Labour and social affairs – these words stand for policy areas which are important to everyone, such as pensions, labour market policy, support for the unemployed, and the inclusion of people with disabilities. Our social security systems, from unemployment benefit to pensions, must be developed further and made fit for the future. The world of work is changing, and trade unions, employers and policymakers are shaping it. We must ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in society. This Committee’s work is of great importance for all generations.”

Dr Matthias Bartke, 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 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.
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 46 members of the Committee on Labour and Social Affairs, chaired by Matthias Bartke (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 support for the unemployed to benefits for asylum seekers. 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 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 early stage. These reports are the subject of

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 roughly 140 billion euros in 2018 – 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.
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, health and safety at work 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.
Items of business relating to European affairs are becoming ever more important in 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.
After all, changes to social legislation have a major impact on the lives of many people. One example is the future of the statutory pension. The questions examined by the Committee in this context include how long workers are required – and are able – to work, how high contribution rates will be in future and how much money people will receive from the statutory pension. 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 labour law – with a right for part-time workers to return to full-time work – and enforcement of the minimum wage. The parliamentarians are also grappling with the challenges...
posed by the digital transformation of the working world (Work 4.0). In addition, the Committee is responsible for issues such as unemployment benefit, basic income support for jobseekers and social assistance – and for the question of how policy-makers can help unemployed people returning to the labour market. In this context, the development of a social labour market for the long-term unemployed has been announced. 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.
Committee members

The 46 members of the Committee on Labour and Social Affairs

Dr. Matthias Bartke,
SPD
Chairman
Lawyer, former senior civil servant,
b. 16 Jan. 1959 in Bremen;
mixed; one child.
Bundestag Member since 2013

Matthias W. Birkwald,
The Left Party
Deputy Chairman,
The Left Party spokesman on the Committee,
The Left Party spokesman on labour and social affairs
Social scientist,
b. 28 Sep. 1961 in Münster;
unmarried.
Bundestag Member since 2009
Frank Heinrich, CDU/CSU
Theologian, b. 25 Jan. 1964 in Siegen; married; four children. Bundestag Member since 2009

Torbjörn Kartes, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 23 Apr. 1979 in Freiburg im Breisgau; married. Bundestag Member since 2017

Marc Biadacz, CDU/CSU
Social scientist, b. 3 Sep. 1979 in Böblingen; married. Bundestag Member since 2017

Peter Aumer, CDU/CSU
Business administrator, b. 17 Apr. 1976 in Regensburg; unmarried. Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017

Thomas Heilmann, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 16 July 1964 in Dortmund; unmarried; four children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Antje Lezius, CDU/CSU
Self-employed management consultant, b. 30 June 1960 in Kusel; divorced; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Marc Biadacz, CDU/CSU
Social scientist, b. 3 Sep. 1979 in Böblingen; married. Bundestag Member since 2017

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Antje Lezius, CDU/CSU
Self-employed management consultant, b. 30 June 1960 in Kusel; divorced; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013
Gisela Manderla, CDU/CSU
Environmental consultant, b. 11 Feb. 1958 in Düsseldorf; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2018

Wilfried Oellers, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 16 Sep. 1975 in Mönchengladbach; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Jana Schimke, CDU/CSU
Political scientist, b. 6 Sep. 1979 in Cottbus; unmarried; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Uwe Schummer, CDU/CSU
Wholesale and foreign trade clerk, b. 14 Nov. 1957 in Adelaide, Australia. Bundestag Member since 2002

Stephan Stracke, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 1 Apr. 1974 in Marktoberdorf; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2009

Max Straubinger, CDU/CSU
Insurance salesman, farmer, b. 12 Aug. 1954 in Oberlucken; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 1994
Dr h.c. Albert H. Weiler, CDU/CSU
Public administration specialist, business administrator, political scientist, b. 15 Oct. 1965 in Mayen; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2013

Peter Weiß, CDU/CSU
CDU/CSU spokesman on labour and social affairs
Head of section, executive, b. 12 Mar. 1956 in Freiburg im Breisgau; three children. Bundestag Member since 1998

Kai Whittaker, CDU/CSU
Economist, b. 10 Apr. 1985 in Baden-Baden; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2013

Professor Matthias Zimmer, CDU/CSU
CDU/CSU spokesman on the Committee
University lecturer, b. 3 May 1961 in Marburg; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2009

Michael Gerdes, SPD
Mining electrician, b. 23 May 1960; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2009

Angelika Glöckner, SPD
Public administration specialist, business administrator, b. 5 Feb. 1962 in Pirmasens; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2014
Gabriele Hiller-Ohm, SPD
Journalist, employee of the state of Schleswig-Holstein, b. 28 Feb. 1953 in Lübeck; two children. Bundestag Member since 2002

Ralf Kapschack, SPD
Journalist, b. 24 Dec. 1954 in Witten; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Daniela Kolbe, SPD
Physicist, b. 22 Feb. 1980 in Schleiz; one child. Bundestag Member since 2009

Dr Martin Rosemann, SPD
Economist, b. 20 Oct. 1976 in Saulgau; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Bernd Rützel, SPD
Former technical officer, b. 2 Oct. 1968 in Gemünden am Main; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Dagmar Schmidt, SPD
Historian, b. 13 Mar. 1973 in Gießen; one child. Bundestag Member since 2013

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Kerstin Tack, 
SPD 
SPD spokeswoman on the Committee, 
SPD spokeswoman on labour and social affairs
Youth and community worker, 
b. 11 Nov. 1968 
in Wittingen; 
unmarried. 
Bundestag Member since 2009

Jörg Schneider, 
AfD 
Mechanical engineer, 
b. 14 May 1964 
in Solingen; 
divorced. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Jürgen Pohl, 
AfD 
Lawyer, 
b. 7 Jan. 1964 
in Magdeburg; 
marrid; one child. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Martin Sichert, 
AfD 
Business administrator, 
b. 10 June 1980 
in Nuremberg; 
unmarried; one child. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

René Springer, 
AfD 
Political scientist, 
b. 15 July 1979 
in Berlin. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Ulrike Schielke-Ziesing, 
AfD 
Public administration specialist, 
b. 17 June 1969 
in Neubrandenburg; 
marrid; three children. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

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Bundestag Member since 2017

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AfD 
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b. 15 July 1979 
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Bundestag Member since 2017

Ulrike Schielke-Ziesing, 
AfD 
Public administration specialist, 
b. 17 June 1969 
in Neubrandenburg; 
marrid; three children. 
Bundestag Member since 2017
Uwe Witt,  
AfD  
AfD spokesman on the Committee,  
AfD spokesman on labour and social affairs  
Human resources specialist,  
b. 1 Oct. 1959 in Witten.  
Bundestag Member since 2017

Jens Beeck,  
FDP  
Lawyer,  
b. 19 Sep. 1969 in Mannheim-Neckarau;  
mixed; three children.  
Bundestag Member since 2017

Carl-Julius Cronenberg,  
FDP  
Entrepreneur,  
b. 30 July 1962 in Arnsberg;  
mixed.  
Bundestag Member since 2017

Pascal Kober,  
FDP  
FDP spokesman on the Committee,  
FDP spokesman on social affairs  
Military chaplain,  
b. 3 July 1971 in Sindelfingen;  
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Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017

Till Mansmann,  
FDP  
Physicist,  
b. 8 Jan. 1968 in Mannheim-Neckarau;  
mixed; one child.  
Bundestag Member since 2017

Jens Beeck,  
FDP  
Lawyer,  
b. 19 Sep. 1969 in Mannheim-Neckarau;  
mixed; three children.  
Bundestag Member since 2017

Johannes Vogel,  
FDP  
FDP spokesman on labour market and pensions policy  
Political scientist,  
b. 29 Apr. 1982 in Wermelskirchen;  
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Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017

Jens Beeck,  
FDP  
Lawyer,  
b. 19 Sep. 1969 in Mannheim-Neckarau;  
mixed; three children.  
Bundestag Member since 2017

Johannes Vogel,  
FDP  
FDP spokesman on labour market and pensions policy  
Political scientist,  
b. 29 Apr. 1982 in Wermelskirchen;  
unmarried.  
Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017
Susanne Ferschl,
The Left Party
Chemical laboratory technician, business mediator,
b. 10 Mar. 1973
in Schwaz, Austria;
made.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Jessica Tatti,
The Left Party
Social worker,
b. 22 Apr. 1981
in Marbach am Neckar;
unmarried.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Jutta Krellmann,
The Left Party
Trade union secretary,
b. 7 Jan. 1956
in Johannisberg,
Rheingau.
Bundestag Member since 2009

Markus Kurth,
Alliance 90/The Greens
Spokesman on the Committee,
Spokesman on labour and social affairs
Political scientist,
b. 14 Apr. 1966
in Beuel,
(now Bonn-Beuel);
one child.
Bundestag Member since 2002

Sven Lehmann,
Alliance 90/The Greens
Political scientist,
b. 4 Dec. 1979
in Troisdorf-Sieglar.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Cornelia Möhring,
The Left Party
Socio-economist, consultant to works councils,
Bundestag Member since 2009

Jessica Tatti,
The Left Party
Social worker,
b. 22 Apr. 1981
in Marbach am Neckar;
unmarried.
Bundestag Member since 2017

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Sven Lehmann,
Alliance 90/The Greens
Political scientist,
b. 4 Dec. 1979
in Troisdorf-Sieglar.
Bundestag Member since 2017
Beate Müller-Gemmeke, Alliance 90/The Greens
Youth and community worker,
b. 7 Oct. 1960
in Frankfurt am Main;
made; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2009

Corinna Rüffer, Alliance 90/The Greens
Politician,
b. 11 Oct. 1975
in Osnabrück;
unmarried; one child.
Bundestag Member since 2013
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/tagesordnungen

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

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