

Hotline W

Hotline W, the Research Services' information hotline, was set up in 1996 in order to expand the range of services on offer to parliamentarians. It is the central point of contact for Members, political bodies and parliamentary groups of the German Bundestag who wish to commission the Research Services to produce studies or search for specialist information. Hotline W passes on requests for information to the appropriate units, in particular the research sections, the Library, the Parliamentary Archives, the Parliamentary Documentation Division, or the Press Documentation Division. Alternatively, the staff of Hotline W deal with many

requests themselves by carrying out extensive specialist searches in databases and on the internet. Hotline W also offers training courses for Members' staff on accessing information. It cooperates especially closely with the research sections: documents drawn up by the Research Services that have been chosen for publication are issued by Hotline W in printed form and on the intranet and internet.



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Deutscher Bundestag

The Research Services



The Research Services

Service Providers

Providers of services for Members of the German Bundestag, a parliamentary think tank, knowledge managers – the Research Services of the Administration of the German Bundestag play all these roles. The Members of the German Bundestag need academically sound information for their work. This enables them to adequately perform their primary functions, which are to deliberate on and adopt legislation and exercise oversight over the government. The executive branch, the Federal Government, has access to all important specialist information through the ministries. To ensure the Bundestag, as the legislative branch, is on an equal footing, Parliament established an independent research service of its own in the early 1960s. Today, the Research Services are organised as a separate directorate within the Research and External Relations Directorate-General.

The Research Services work exclusively for Parliament. All the Members of the German Bundestag and its bodies, such as the parliamentary committees, are entitled to request information from the Research Services. Their work is guided by a number of binding principles: the appropriate presentation of material for parliamentary purposes, an interdisciplinary approach and party-political neutrality.

Appropriate presentation for parliamentary purposes

From short briefing notes to dossiers that bring together large amounts of material, from informative overviews to in-depth studies: the range of documents the Research Services are asked to draw up is highly diverse. The approach taken is always the same: the first step is to consult the person or body who has requested the information in order to clarify the specific kind of research required and agree a

deadline for delivery. Every request for information is dealt with individually – every piece of work is a tailor-made response to the individual question put. Special emphasis is placed on the appropriate presentation of the material for parliamentary purposes.

Interdisciplinarity

It is increasingly common for parliamentarians to submit requests that do not fall within the remit of a single research section. For example, an interdisciplinary approach is indispensable when it comes to energy policy because it is important for economic, ecological and environmental-law aspects to be taken into account all at the same time, while development and research policy also sometimes need to be taken into consideration. The Research Services also work across disciplinary boundaries when they call on the technical expertise possessed by specialist research institutions, universities or interest groups. One of the

most important points of contact in the context of this kind of ‘knowledge management’ is the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD). This network pools the resources of the research services at the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and of the Council of Europe’s 47 member states, along with the four countries with observer status at the Council of Europe (Canada, Israel, Mexico and the United States).

Political neutrality

The work of the Research Services is characterised by its party-political neutrality. The requests that come in are dealt with in the sequence in which they arrive. Each Member of the German Bundestag and each parliamentary body will receive the same answer to the same enquiry. Following the expiry of an embargo period of four weeks, during which the person or body who placed the request has exclusive use of the results,

the Research Services generally publish the documents produced. The name of the person who commissioned the research remains confidential, however.

Proactive briefings

Alongside the on-demand work they are commissioned to carry out, the Research Services have in recent years expanded their proactive briefings. These involve the production of subject dossiers and background information for parliamentarians on topics that will foreseeably rise up the political agenda in the near future. The proactive briefings that are produced can be found on the German Bundestag’s intranet, and some are also posted on the internet (www.bundestag.de/analysen). In particular, the concise, informative series *Topical Term* and *Topical Term – Europe* have become flagship publications

for the Research Services. They meet with great interest not only from parliamentarians, but also from teachers, school pupils, students and journalists.

Knowledge managers

The Research Services Directorate consists of ten research sections. The Research Section on European Affairs (PE 6) within Directorate PE is available to answer enquiries on European issues. Together, the Research Sections cover the whole spectrum of political topics.



The research sections

WD 1

History, Contemporary History and Politics

WD 2

Foreign Affairs, International Law, Economic Cooperation and Development, Defence, Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid

WD 3

Constitutional Law and Public Administration

WD 4

Budget and Finance

WD 5

Economics and Transport, Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection

WD 6

Labour and Social Affairs

WD 7

Civil, Penal and Procedural Law, Environmental Protection Law, Building and Urban Development

WD 8

Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Education and Research

WD 9

Health, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

WD 10

Culture, Media and Sport

PE 6

European Affairs