The Budget Committee
“The Budget Committee occupies a special position among the German Bundestag’s permanent committees, as it deals with all matters relating to planning and control of the federal budget. In addition to serving as the lead committee for deliberations on the draft annual budget, the Budget Committee also considers all other budgetary bills and all finance bills. The Federal Ministries are required to justify to the Committee extra-budgetary and excess expenditure above a certain level, for example. As Chairman of the Committee, it is my task to ensure that taxpayers’ money is used in a way which meets these legal requirements.”

Peter Boehringer, AfD
Chairman of the Budget 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.
No money without Parliament’s consent – the Bundestag’s power of the purse can be summed up by this simple phrase. The Federal Government can only take in and spend money each year if the Bundestag has given its consent to that year’s Budget Act. The power of the purse is one of Parliament’s oldest and most important rights, and is often described as its central prerogative.

The Budget Committee plays a key role in the exercise of this power, and therefore holds a pre-eminent position among the Bundestag’s permanent committees. It pre-

The Budget Committee – responsible for citizens’ money
As a result, the members of the Budget Committee are not always popular with their colleagues from the other committees. When it comes to programmes which may be considered necessary or desirable by the members of the transport, social affairs, health or defence committees, for example, there are two key questions which the members of the Budget Committee have to keep in mind: can we pay for this? And if so, how – by taking in more money, or by reducing spending?

The “debt brake”, or limit on government debt – which was enshrined in the Basic Law in 2009 – has brought an even greater urgency to the Budget Committee’s work. Under Article 115 (2) of the Basic Law, the plenary’s decision on the Budget Act. It also oversees the execution of the budget. It monitors whether the Federal Government is complying with the relevant regulations in its use of the funds available to it. Outside its core role, the parliamentary consideration of the draft budget, the Budget Committee also has a general right to examine and to be involved in decision-making on laws with significant financial implications in all fields of policy.

In such cases, the Committee must decide whether the planned legislation is compatible with the budget situation. If the Committee decides that it is not, and the Bundestag endorses its decision, no further deliberations can take place on the bill.
Law, revenues and expenditures are, in principle, to be balanced without revenue from credits. If it is nonetheless necessary to borrow funds, this is limited to 0.35 per cent of gross domestic product. Not least thanks to Germany’s good economic performance in recent years, the federal budgets since 2014 have been balanced – in other words, they have not included any borrowing. The banking, sovereign-debt and economic crisis in several eurozone members has also resulted in a further expansion in the Budget Committee’s competences in recent years. Germany has worked together with its eurozone partners to set up various assistance programmes; these are, however, tied to strict conditions designed to consolidate the public finances of the country in question and boost its economic performance, with compliance being monitored by the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank.

These efforts have resulted in the Fiscal Compact and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). The latter has been established as an international financial institution which can provide stability support to ESM members experiencing severe financing problems, subject to strict conditions and requirements. The Budget Committee has to be consulted on matters concerning the ESM and the disbursement of financial assistance.

With 44 members, the Budget Committee is one of the German Bundestag’s largest committees in the current electoral term. And since this is a particularly key area in terms of Parliament’s scrutiny of the government’s work, the post of Chair of the Budget Committee is traditionally given to the largest opposition parliamentary group. In the current electoral term, Peter Boehringer (AfD) has been elected Chairman of the Committee.
In theory, the budget process is quite simple. The Federal Government sets out what it wants to spend money on. The Bundestag examines its proposal, makes changes, and takes a decision. Then the Federal Government uses the funds to carry out its work. The Bundestag oversees this process. And the cycle repeats itself every year. In reality, the process is somewhat more complicated – after all, the federal budget involves hundreds of billions of euros and covers every area of policy, from A for Arbeitsmarkt (the labour market) to Z for Ziviler Friedensdienst (the Civil Peace Service). But the basic principle stands. Every March, the Federal Cabinet adopts what are known as “benchmark figures”, which set binding spending limits for all the ministries. The estimated revenue and the financial plan for the coming five years are also set out. Subsequently, from March to July, the ministries establish the detailed plans for their own budgets, in a hierarchical process, then negotiate them with the Federal Ministry of Finance. In late June or early July, following further intensive negotiations within the government, the Cabinet adopts the government draft of the Budget Act – to which the roughly 3000 pages of the budget are appended. During the “budget week” in September, the first debate on the government draft takes place in the Bundestag. This is one of the highlights of the parliamentary year. Following this first reading, the focus shifts to the Budget Committee. Each parliamentary group nominates a member to serve as rapporteur for each departmental budget. The rapporteur then goes through the departmental budget with his or her colleagues, holds discussions
with federal ministers, state secretaries and civil servants, and proposes changes. The rapporteurs’ proposals then form the basis for the Budget Committee’s consideration of the departmental budget; the Bundestag’s specialised committees also submit expert opinions which are taken into account. The Committee votes on hundreds of motions for amendments, resulting in a collection of recommendations for a decision that enjoy majority support in the Committee. The recommendations are submitted to the plenary of the Bundestag, where, finally, the Budget Act and the budget receive their second and third readings and are adopted. The Budget Committee’s power to make changes to the draft budget shows how powerful the German Parliament is: in many other countries, the parliament can only accept or reject the government’s draft as a whole, without being able to change the details. The role of the Bundestag’s plenary and the Budget Committee does not end once the budget has been adopted; they also have a say in its execution. “Qualified blocks” are imposed on some budget appropriations, for example those relating to new programmes. In this case, the Budget Committee only releases the funds if the government submits the required strategies and reports. If there is a funding shortfall in one area, the Federal Ministry of Finance can authorise excess or extra-budgetary expenditure, but the ministry concerned must make equivalent savings elsewhere. If there is an overall shortfall, a supplementary budget has to be adopted – with the Bundestag and the Budget Committee again playing a crucial role.
The Budget Committee’s subcommittees and other bodies

To facilitate and prepare its work, the Budget Committee has set up two subcommittees: the Auditing Committee and the Subcommittee on European Union Issues. The Auditing Committee is composed of 19 members of the Budget Committee. Their work forms the basis for the discharge of the Federal Government by the plenary of the German Bundestag. They carefully scrutinise how the supreme federal authorities and their executive agencies use the funds allocated to them. In doing so, they work closely with the Bundesrechnungshof, Germany’s Supreme Audit Institution. The Subcommittee on European Union Issues has 13 members. They help the Bundestag to exercise its right to participate in matters concerning the EU, enshrined in Article 23 of the Basic Law. To this end, they deliberate on the steadily increasing number of EU items referred to the Budget Committee. They also hold talks with representatives of the European Court of Auditors, Members of the European Parliament, and the European Commission. In addition to these subcommittees, a number of other parliamentary bodies with special tasks are attached to the Budget Committee. There is the Confidential Committee, which scrutinises the budgets of the intelligence services, and the Federal Finance Panel, which deals with the Federation’s debt management, its holdings in private-law enterprises, and with issues relating to the Financial-Market Stabilisation Fund and the Restructuring Fund. Finally, there is also the Panel established under the Stabilisation Mechanism Act, which, when required, exercises the Bundestag’s participatory rights in relation to the purchase of government bonds by the euro rescue fund. This, too, illustrates Parliament’s far-reaching powers of scrutiny and the Budget Committee’s wide-ranging responsibilities.
Committee members

The 44 members of the Budget Committee
Dr André Berghegger, CDU/CSU  
ْCDU/CSU spokesman on the Committee  
Lawyer,  
b. 5 July 1972  
in Osnabrück;  
marrried; two children.  
Bundestag Member since 2013

Dr Reinhard Brandl, CDU/CSU  
Industrial engineer,  
b. 1 Aug. 1977  
in Ingolstadt;  
unmarried.  
Bundestag Member since 2009

Axel E. Fischer  
CDU/CSU  
Engineer,  
b. 5 May 1966  
in Karlsruhe;  
marrried; six children.  
Bundestag Member since 1998

Ingo Gädechens, CDU/CSU  
Former career service member,  
b. 30 July 1960  
in Lübeck;  
marrried.  
Bundestag Member since 2009

Klaus-Dieter Gröhler, CDU/CSU  
Lawyer,  
b. 17 Apr. 1966  
in Berlin;  
divorced; one child.  
Bundestag Member since 2013

Christian Haase, CDU/CSU  
Public administration specialist,  
b. 6 May 1966  
in Höxter;  
marrried; one child.  
Bundestag Member since 2013
Alois Karl, CDU/CSU  
Lawyer, former mayor,  
b. 22 Nov. 1950  
in Neumarkt;  
mARRIED; two children.  
Bundestag Member since 2005

Carsten Körber, CDU/CSU  
Business administrator,  
b. 11 June 1979  
in Zwickau;  
unmarried.  
Bundestag Member since 2013

Rüdiger Kruse, CDU/CSU  
Executive,  
b. 10 June 1961  
in Hamburg;  
unmarried.  
Bundestag Member since 2009

Patricia Lips, CDU/CSU  
Senior trade specialist,  
b. 21 Dec. 1963  
in Milan, Italy;  
unmarried.  
Bundestag Member since 2002

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

Kerstin Radomski, CDU/CSU  
Teacher,  
b. 1 Nov. 1974  
in Krefeld-Hüls;  
two children.  
Bundestag Member since 2013

Carsten Körber, CDU/CSU  
Business administrator,  
b. 11 June 1979  
in Zwickau;  
unmarried.  
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mARRIED; two children.  
Bundestag Member since 2009

Kerstin Radomski, CDU/CSU  
Teacher,  
b. 1 Nov. 1974  
in Krefeld-Hüls;  
two children.  
Bundestag Member since 2013
Alois Rainer,
CDU/CSU
Butcher,
b. 7 Jan. 1965
in Straubing;
matured; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2013

Eckhardt Rehberg,
CDU/CSU
IT engineer,
b. 3 Apr. 1954
in Ribnitz-Damgarten;
matured; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2005

Josef Rief,
CDU/CSU
Farmer,
b. 13 Apr. 1960
in Illertissen;
matured; three children.
Bundestag Member since 2009

Doris Barnett,
SPD
Lawyer,
b. 22 May 1953
in Ludwigshafen;
matured; one child.
Bundestag Member since 1994

Esther Dilcher,
SPD
Lawyer, notary,
b. 18 Sep. 1965
in Hofgeismar;
matured; three children.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Martin Gerster,
SPD
Parliamentary adviser
in Land Parliament,
b. 30 Aug. 1971
in Biberach an der Riß;
matured; one child.
Bundestag Member since 2005
Michael Groß, SPD
Division manager, b. 26 July 1956 in Marl; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2009

Thomas Jurk, SPD
Radio mechanic, b. 19 June 1962 in Görlitz; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Johannes Kahrs, SPD
SPD spokesman on the Committee Employee, b. 15 Sep. 1963 in Bremen; married. Bundestag Member since 1998

Swen Schulz, SPD
Editorial director, b. 1 Mar. 1968 in Hamburg; three children. Bundestag Member since 2002

Andreas Schwarz, SPD
Business administrator, b. 3 Mar. 1965 in Berleburg; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2013

Sonja Amalie Steffen, SPD
Lawyer, b. 22 Oct. 1963 in Dreiborn/Eifel; three children. Bundestag Member since 2009
Volker Münz, 
AfD 
Economist, 
b. 8 Aug. 1964 
in Verden/Aller; 
married; two children. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

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

Dr Birgit Malsack-Winkemann, 
AfD 
AfD spokeswoman on the Committee 
Judge, 
b. 12 Aug. 1964 
in Darmstadt; 
divorced; two children. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Marcus Bühl, 
AfD 
IT specialist, 
b. 29 Apr. 1977 
in Ilmenau; 
unmarried. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Martin Hohmann, 
AfD 
Lawyer, 
b. 4 Feb. 1948 in Fulda; 
marrried; three children. 
Bundestag Member from 1998 to 2005 and since 2017

Otto Fricke, 
FDP 
Lawyer, 
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AfD spokeswoman on the Committee 
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in Ilmenau; 
unmarried. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

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AfD 
Lawyer, 
b. 4 Feb. 1948 in Fulda; 
marrried; three children. 
Bundestag Member from 1998 to 2005 and since 2017

Otto Fricke, 
FDP 
Lawyer, 
b. 21 Nov. 1965 
in Krefeld; 
marrried; three children. 
Bundestag Member from 2002 to 2013 and since 2017
Dr Stefan Ruppert, FDP
FDP spokesman on the Committee Lawyer, b. 2 July 1971 in Frankfurt am Main; married; two children. Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017

Heidrun Bluhm, The Left Party Architectural draughts-person, social scientist, b. 18 Jan. 1958 in Schwerin; divorced; two children. Bundestag Member since 2005

Ulla Ihnen, FDP Lawyer, former State Secretary, b. 6 Jan. 1956 in Wittmund; widowed. Bundestag Member since 2017

Karsten Klein, FDP Business administrator, b. 2 Dec. 1977 in Aschaffenburg; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Christoph Meyer, FDP Business administrator, b. 30 Aug. 1975 in Berlin; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2017


Heidrun Bluhm, The Left Party Architectural draughts-person, social scientist, b. 18 Jan. 1958 in Schwerin; divorced; two children. Bundestag Member since 2005

Karsten Klein, FDP Business administrator, b. 2 Dec. 1977 in Aschaffenburg; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Christoph Meyer, FDP Business administrator, b. 30 Aug. 1975 in Berlin; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2017
Dr Gesine Lötzsch, 
The Left Party 
spokeswoman on the Committee 
Philologist, 
b. 7 Aug. 1961 
in Berlin; 
made; two children. 
Bundestag Member since 2002

Victor Perli, 
The Left Party 
Political scientist, 
b. 1 Feb. 1982 
in Bad Oeynhausen; 
unmarried. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Ekin Deligöz, 
Alliance 90/The Greens 
Public administration science specialist, 
b. 21 Apr. 1971 
in Tokat, Turkey; 
made; two children. 
Bundestag Member since 1998

Anja Hajduk, 
Alliance 90/The Greens 
Psychologist, 
b. 8 June 1963 
in Duisburg. 
Bundestag Member from 2002 to 2008 and since 2013

Sven-Christian Kindler, 
Alliance 90/The Greens 
speaksman on the Committee 
Business administrator, 
b. 14 Feb. 1985 
in Hanover; 
made; two children. 
Bundestag Member since 2009

Dr Tobias Lindner, 
Alliance 90/The Greens 
Economist, 
b. 11 Jan. 1982 
in Karlsruhe. 
Bundestag Member since 2011
Permanent substitutes

Permanent substitutes attend all meetings of the Budget Committee and act as rapporteurs.

Tankred Schipanski, 
CDU/CSU 
Lawyer, 
b. 30 Dec. 1976 
in Leipzig; 
moved. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2009

Markus Uhl, 
CDU/CSU 
Business administrator, 
b. 31 Oct. 1979 
in Cologne; 
moved. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2017

Ulrich Freese, 
SPD 
Trade union secretary, 
b. 12 Apr. 1951 
in Drevenack; 
moved; three children. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2013

Svenja Stadler, 
SPD 
Senior PR adviser, 
b. 26 Aug. 1976 
in Oldenburg; 
moved; two children. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2013

Michael Georg Link, 
FDP 
Former Minister of 
State, 
b. 6 Feb. 1963 
in Heilbronn. 
Bundestag Member 
from 2005 to 2013

Markus Uhl, 
CDU/CSU 
Business administrator, 
b. 31 Oct. 1979 
in Cologne; 
moved. 
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FDP 
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State, 
b. 6 Feb. 1963 
in Heilbronn. 
Bundestag Member 
from 2005 to 2013
Information online

The Budget Committee
www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a08

The Federal Ministry of Finance
www.bundesfinanzministerium.de

The Bundesrechnungshof
(Germany’s Supreme Audit Institution)
www.bundesrechnungshof.de

Contact details for the Committee Secretariat

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Haushaltsausschuss
Platz der Republik 1
11011 Berlin
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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