

The German Bundestag online

At www.bundestag.de you can find information on the German Parliament, its Members and committees. The website enables you to find information and engage in dialogue with the Bundestag and its Members.

- >> Clicking on the **German Bundestag** menu and then its **Members** section will take you to an alphabetical list of all 622 Members of the Bundestag. Click on a Member's name for full biographical details (in German).
- >> The **Committees** pages provide useful information on the role of the parliamentary committees, and list the members of each committee.
- >> The **German Bundestag** menu also provides additional information on the organs and other bodies of the Bundestag in the 17th electoral term.
- >> The **European Union** and **International** sections, for example, contain a compendium of useful information on European legislation and the Bundestag's involvement in international affairs.
- >> The **Documents & Research** menu enables you to access a wide range of information material and databases, such as parliamentary printed papers, records of plenary proceedings, updates on the passage of legislative proposals, and summaries of reports produced by the Research Services.
- >> From the **Parliamentary Television** section you can access live Webcast coverage of plenary debates on the Internet and listen to audio broadcasts.
- >> Via the **Service** and **Visit the Bundestag** menus, you can download information material, order brochures, find out about the facilities offered by the Visitors' Service, and lots more.



Der virtuelle Adler – interactive information

Who is the youngest Member of the Bundestag? What is an 'overhang mandate'? Who is entitled to vote in Germany? Answers to these and other questions relating to Parliament can now be found at any time of the day or night through

the 'virtual eagle' (*der virtuelle Adler*), an interactive agent available on the German version of the Bundestag site at www.bundestag.de. A question is entered in German in the input field and is sent by clicking on the *Frage absenden* button. The 'virtual eagle' provides an immediate answer. Since the system is in its infancy, the eagle sometimes does not understand a question in the way it is initially formulated, but it is learning all the time.



German Bundestag

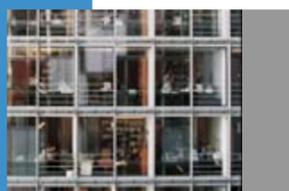
www.bundestag.de

Facts

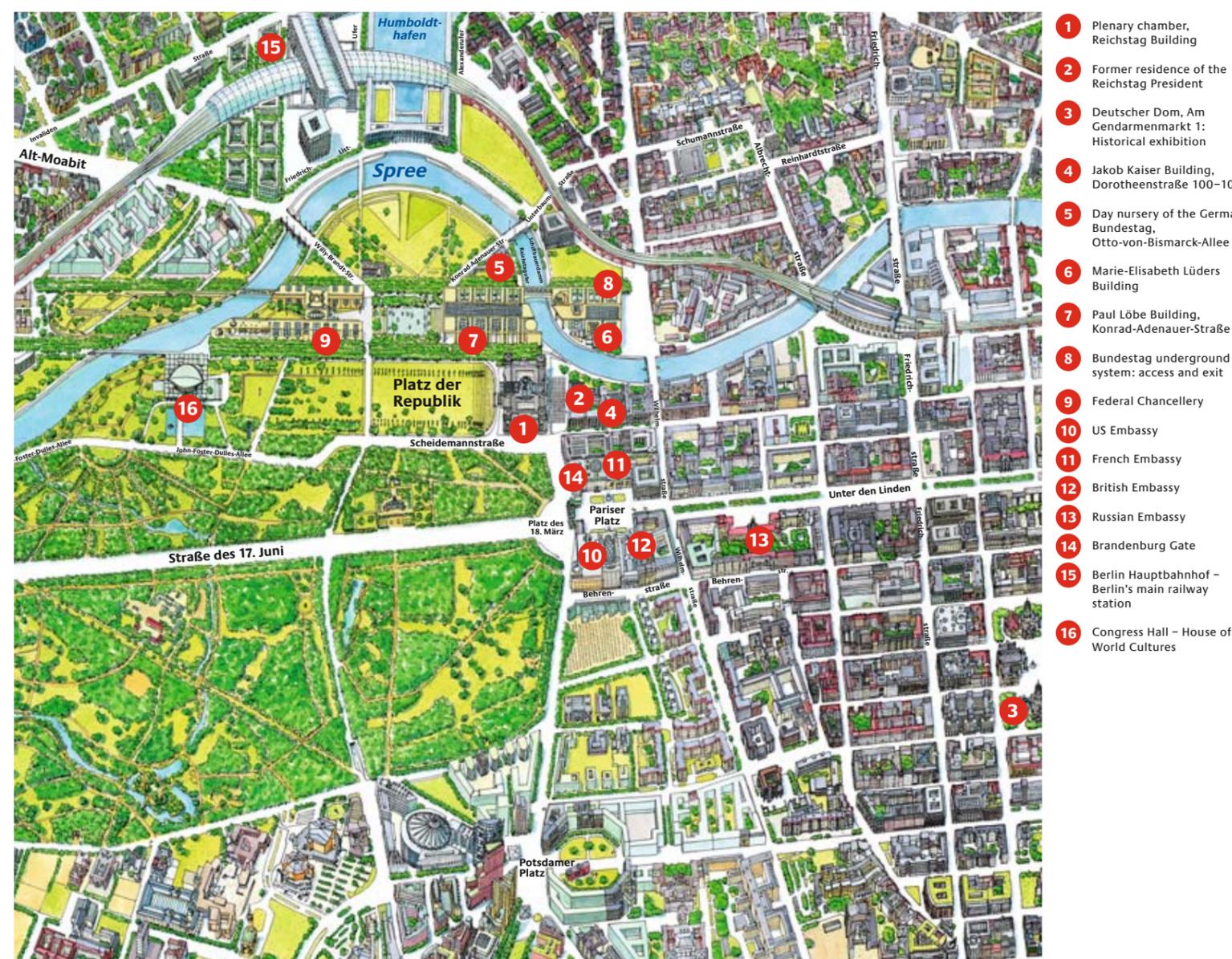
The Bundestag at a glance

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The parliamentary quarter in Berlin (January 2010)



- 1 Plenary chamber, Reichstag Building
- 2 Former residence of the Reichstag President
- 3 Deutscher Dom, Am Gendarmenmarkt 1: Historical exhibition
- 4 Jakob Kaiser Building, Dorotheenstraße 100-101
- 5 Day nursery of the German Bundestag, Otto-von-Bismarck-Allee 2
- 6 Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building
- 7 Paul Löbe Building, Konrad-Adenauer-Straße 1
- 8 Bundestag underground system: access and exit
- 9 Federal Chancellery
- 10 US Embassy
- 11 French Embassy
- 12 British Embassy
- 13 Russian Embassy
- 14 Brandenburg Gate
- 15 Berlin Hauptbahnhof – Berlin's main railway station
- 16 Congress Hall – House of World Cultures

- >> child-friendly **tours of the Reichstag Building for families** with children aged 6 to 14 at weekends;
- >> **children's days** with special guided tours of the building for children aged 6 to 14 with at least one accompanying adult on four dates in the year;
- >> **role play**, in which school pupils from the 10th year of schooling onwards experience parliamentary democracy through a role-playing game;
- >> 90-minute **slide presentation** in sitting weeks on technology and energy in the Reichstag Building and the story of the construction process;
- >> **At the invitation of Members of the Bundestag, other opportunities are available for groups of limited size:**

fact-finding visit: when the Bundestag is not sitting, visiting groups can have a briefing session, a talk with the host Member, refreshments and a group photograph;

plenary visit: one-hour attendance at a plenary sitting, talk with the host Member, refreshments and a group photograph

Historical exhibition presented by the German Bundestag

Milestones – Setbacks – Sidetracks: the Path to Parliamentary Democracy in Germany

- >> open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day except Monday (closing time 7 p.m. from May to September)
- >> venue: Deutscher Dom, Gendarmenmarkt 1, 10117 Berlin-Mitte
- >> guided tours by appointment: Tel. +49 (0)30 227 30431 or 30432, Fax +49 (0)30 227 30438
- >> conducted in English, French or Italian on request
- >> daily one-hour guided tours for individual visitors at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.; also available in English and French by prior arrangement
- >> audio guides in German, English and French (free of charge)

Information:

All of the above options offered by the Visitors' Service require advance booking in writing to the following address but are free of charge:

Deutscher Bundestag – Besucherdienst –
Platz der Republik 1, 11011 Berlin
Fax: +49 (0)30 227 30027 | E-Mail: besucherdienst@bundestag.de

Answers to questions regarding the various types of visit can be obtained by phoning either of the following numbers: +49 (0)30 227 32152 or 35908
Further details are contained in the information brochure Visiting the German Bundestag, which can be requested from the Visitors' Service or viewed on the Internet.

3. Committee meetings and hearings

Visitors wishing to listen to open committee meetings and hearings should book in advance with the secretariat of the committee in question; access is subject to availability of seats. A visitor's pass will be issued to visitors on deposit of their passport or national identity card at the reception desk. The committee secretariats can be contacted through the switchboard on +49 (0)30 227 0. Details of open committee meetings can be found at www.bundestag.de.

Information material

Information material on the German Bundestag is available for all visitors to take away and can naturally be ordered direct too. Requests should be addressed to:

Deutscher Bundestag – Öffentlichkeitsarbeit –
Platz der Republik 1, 11011 Berlin
Tel.: +49 (0)30 227 333 00 (Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.)
Fax: +49 (0)38 204 669 97 / Email: infomaterial@bundestag.de

Information material can also be ordered online on the Bundestag website:
www.bundestag.de
The website provides an updated list of all types of information material – brochures, CD-ROMs, etc.

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The German Bundestag

—an open House—

The German Bundestag is the heart of our democracy. The dedication '*Dem Deutschen Volke*' ('To the German People') is mounted above the western portico of the Reichstag Building. Whoever sits as a Member here is elected by the German people and makes laws for everyone living in Germany. The Bundestag is an open House. Indeed, since it has been located in Berlin, it has become a world-famous tourist attraction. More and more visitors are taking the opportunity to gain a direct insight into parliamentary proceedings and are inspired by the indelible impression of the redesigned Reichstag Building. Guests from around the world make sure they do not leave Berlin without visiting the Bundestag. Groups of visitors from German constituencies who want to see their Member of the Bundestag in action in Berlin join the bustling throng of politicians, journalists and staff around the Reichstag Building, the new parliamentary buildings, the Brandenburg Gate and the Federal Chancellery. Pleasure boats sail on the arc of the River Spree, conveying tourists and day trippers who wish to look into the heart of our democracy. The Bundestag is one of the highlights of every visit to Berlin—and there is no entrance charge for anyone visiting Parliament.

“The German Bundestag is not just a public body like any other. The Bundestag is at the very heart of our constitutional order. It is the pivotal political forum of the nation.”

Norbert Lammert
President of the Bundestag





Visitors within the dome (above) and in front of the entrance in the western portico.

The German Bundestag stands for transparency and openness in parliamentary democracy, giving everyone an equal right to share in political life. Public accessibility is as crucial to democracy as air is to life. Democracy does not exclude minorities and always provides the public with insight into parliamentary decision-making processes. This is one of the things that makes it so appealing for many people throughout the world. This key aspect of democracy played an important part in the design of the new parliamentary quarter in Berlin. Anyone wandering past the Bundestag buildings can look through the modern glass frontages and see the desks of some of the 6,000 or so people (Members of the Bundestag and their staff, members of the Bundestag administration and staff of the parliamentary groups) who work in the Bundestag.

This is a modern Parliament wrapped in a historic cloak. The outer shape of the Reichstag Building has not changed. Modern elements, however, have been integrated; old architecture is combined with futuristic-looking forms; the whimsical and the starkly functional complement each other in innovative harmony. The glass dome has already become an internationally recognised emblem of Berlin. People from all parts of the world are visiting the new Bundestag: official guests and heads of state or government, such as Bill Clinton, former President of the United States, his successor, George W. Bush, and Moshe Katsav, former President of the State of Israel, as well as crowned heads, including the British sovereign, Queen Elizabeth II.

Right: Aerial photograph of the parliamentary quarter, showing the Reichstag Building and the Paul Löbe Building.

The Parliamentary Visitors' Service offers many programmes, tailored to the diverse needs of the three million or so visitors who visit the Bundestag every year. One example is the opportunity to observe a plenary sitting. The visitors' gallery, comprising six tribunes overhanging the plenary chamber, enables visitors and journalists to experience parliamentary debates on the spot—total immersion in live politics in the German Bundestag.



Did you know ...?

... that the German Bundestag, with about three million visitors a year, is the world's most-visited parliament?

Since the move to Berlin in 1999, some 30 million visitors have come from all parts of the world. They receive information from the Visitors' Service in nine foreign languages, ranging from English to Polish. When the German Bundestag had its seat in Bonn, only about 11.5 million visitors were counted in the parliament building, the Bundeshaus, in the entire period from 1949 to 1997.



... that the Bundestag is not built on sand?

The foundations of the Bundestag building are still carried today by oak piles that were driven in when construction began in the 1890s. Additional support now comes from twelve massive concrete pillars erected to carry the new glass cupola, which weighs 1,200 tonnes.



... that one particular 'high flyer' is always present in the plenary chamber?

On the front glazed wall of the plenary chamber, above the heads of the Members, hangs the 'fat hen'—a popular nickname for the federal eagle. The heraldic symbol of the Federal Republic, made of aluminium, weighs in at a mighty two and a half tonnes and covers a vast area of almost 58 square metres.



... that Parliament has the fastest shorthand writers?

The proceedings at every plenary sitting are recorded by the parliamentary shorthand writers, who can write an average of 400 syllables per minute—faster than anyone actually speaks. Thanks to the shorthand writers, all the speeches and interventions can be read in the printed or online version of the minutes of plenary proceedings only 24 hours after the end of a sitting, including precise descriptions of reactions (prolonged, sustained or isolated applause, shouts of approval, heckling, etc.) from all the sides of the House.



... that Members of the Bundestag ask a lot of questions?

In the electoral term from 2005 to 2009, the Members of the Bundestag put 12,789 written and 2,703 oral questions to the Federal Government. More than 14,000 printed papers were discussed in the Bundestag, 616 laws were adopted, and there were 233 regular plenary sittings.



... that the Bundestag has not entirely abandoned its Rhineland roots?

On Thursday and Friday mornings when Parliament is sitting, the bells of Cologne Cathedral ring out in the Bundestag at exactly 8.35. The sound of the bells is reproduced on a tape recording and invites Members to attend the Christian morning service in the multi-faith chapel.



On the parliamentary-group level of the Reichstag Building.



The German Bundestag

—The heart of democracy—

The German Bundestag plays a key role in the political system of the Federal Republic of Germany. Every time the Bundestag is elected, the people of Germany determine anew who should represent their interests. The people—the sovereign body—lend their power to Parliament for a limited time only. As Article 20(2) of the Basic Law puts it, “All state authority emanates from the people”. This makes the German Bundestag the supreme organ of the German constitution as well as the only national body that is directly elected by the people.

State authority is exercised by the classical triad of legislature, executive and judiciary. In the interplay of these three branches, each of which checks and balances the others, the legislative role devolves on the Bundestag. This places great responsibility in the hands

Plenary chamber
of the German
Bundestag.



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of Parliament, which controls the future development of politics and society and has far-reaching effects on people's lives.

The Bundestag elected the Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who heads the executive. The votes of the parliamentarians also weigh heavily in the election of the Federal President, as the Federal Convention, which elects the Head of State, comprises all the Members of the Bundestag and an equal number of representatives of the federal states (*Länder*).

The Bundestag has regulated its own affairs independently in its Rules of Procedure, which set out the requirements for the performance of its tasks, the conduct of its meetings and the manner of its deliberations.

Parliament and Government

The Bundestag exercises an important power of scrutiny over the Government. No Chancellor or government minister can escape this scrutiny. In votes on government projects, the Federal Chancellor depends on the confidence of Parliament. If a government cannot convince the Members of the Bundestag, it cannot pursue its political aims.

The German Bundestag is the forum of our nation. It is the Bundestag that sets out the waymarkers for the future of the country, and it is here that Germany decides on its role in Europe and in the world.

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/function



Division of powers: Bundestag (above); Federal Chancellery (middle); Federal Constitutional Court (below).

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Parliament makes the laws

The German Bundestag is the place where laws are made. Legislation is an extremely complex task and one to which a great deal of parliamentary work is devoted.



Vote in the Bundestag (above); meeting of the Committee on Economics and Technology (below).

A **legislative initiative** may come from the Federal Government, from within the Bundestag or from the Bundesrat. Many individual steps have to be taken before a law enters into force. A bill cannot pass through the Bundestag without being carefully examined by Members in parliamentary bodies and having its pros and cons documented in amendment motions, committee reports and parliamentary resolutions. For this reason, each bill is discussed three times by Parliament at **plenary sittings**. These deliberations are called 'readings'.

At first reading, the discussion is generally about basic principles. In many cases, the House will decide to shorten this stage by referring the bill without debate to the competent **committees**. In committee, the bill is probed by specialised politicians from all of the parliamentary groups, who examine its substance and its implications. Hearings of experts can also be arranged for this purpose. The second reading of the bill is then held in the plenary chamber; at this stage it is generally accompanied by proposed amendments. Only after this discussion can the third reading and the vote take place.

Through the **Bundesrat**, the 16 federal states (*Länder*) play a part in national legislation. Bills affecting the interests of the *Länder* require the explicit consent of the Bundesrat. In the case of other bills, the Bundesrat may lodge an objection to their adoption.

If the Bundestag and Bundesrat cannot agree on a bill, they can refer the matter to the **Mediation Committee**.



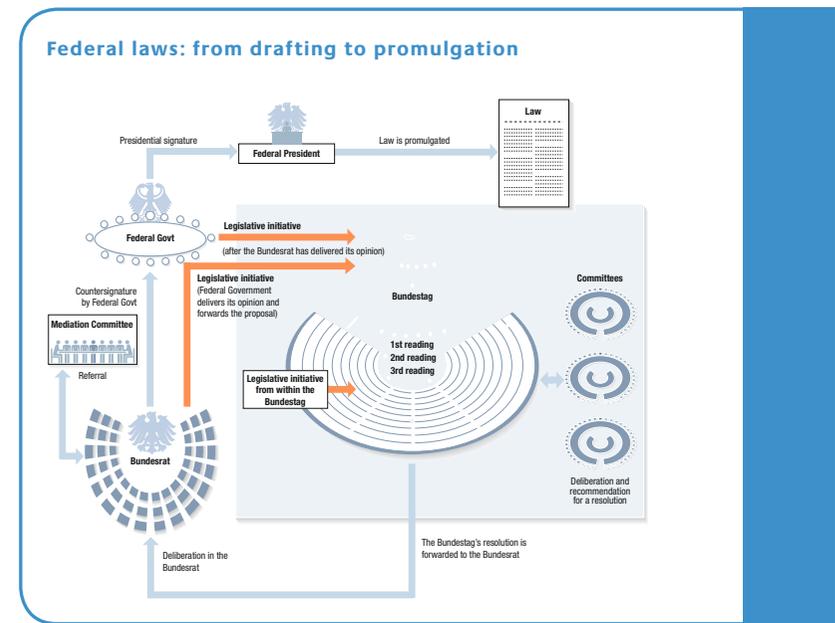
Bundesrat building.

This committee, comprising 16 representatives each from the Bundestag and Bundesrat, tries to find a compromise. The role of the Mediation Committee can be particularly important when the majority groups in one House are in the minority in the other. If the Mediation Committee arrives at a compromise, this must be put to the vote in the Bundestag and then in the Bundesrat before the new act can enter into force.



A volume of the statute book.

Sometimes differences of opinion between the Bundestag and Bundesrat prove irreconcilable. In the case of a bill requiring the consent of the Bundesrat, this signals the final defeat of the proposal. In cases where the Bundesrat only has the right of objection, however, the Bundestag can overrule its objection.



The Bundestag scrutinises the Government

One of the traditional functions of a parliament in a democratic state is the scrutiny of government. This role is naturally performed first and foremost by the opposition groups, which cannot muster a parliamentary majority in the Bundestag, although Members from the groups in the governing coalition engage in scrutiny too. This function of Parliament has proved to be a useful control mechanism, for scarcely any bills presented by the Federal Government emerge unscathed from the committee stage, regardless of how the seats may be distributed amongst the parties.

Joschka Fischer, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, giving evidence in 2005 before a committee of inquiry into allegations concerning the issuing of visas (15th electoral term).

Among the key instruments of scrutiny are the **budgetary powers** of the Bundestag. In the annual Budget Act, the Bundestag determines the level of public revenue and expenditure, for which the Federal Minister of Finance is accountable to Parliament. The budget debates are undoubtedly a highlight of the parliamentary year. As with all other debates in the plenary



chamber, government policy is under scrutiny, and the Government must justify its policies to Parliament.

The German Bundestag has a wide range of **instruments** with which it can scrutinise the work of the Government. For example, individual Members can submit written questions to the Government, and government representatives are required to give direct answers to Members' questions at a question-and-answer session with ministers after cabinet meetings and at parliamentary Question Time. The Members of the Bundestag certainly make good use of these opportunities to question the Government.

In addition, the parliamentary groups in the Bundestag can demand written information on particular issues by means of 'major' and 'minor' parliamentary questions. Answers to major questions quite often lead to parliamentary debates in which the Government is required to present its case and answer questions. There is also the debate on a matter of topical interest, an instrument used chiefly by the opposition groups to subject government policy to critical analysis.

Committees of inquiry have proved to be an incisive instrument for the parliamentary scrutiny of government activity. These committees are appointed on the motion of one quarter of the Members of the Bundestag. The Members serving on committees of inquiry can summon government representatives as witnesses and question them, which may be done in front of live television cameras.

The Bundestag also scrutinises the Government through the **Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces**. The Commissioner is appointed by the Bundestag for the purpose of parliamentary scrutiny of the armed forces. He keeps Parliament up to date on the situation in the Bundeswehr and intervenes in cases where the fundamental rights of military personnel are infringed.



The Government is accountable to the Bundestag: hearing room (above) and government benches in the Bundestag (below).



The Bundestag

—Forum of the nation—

The Bundestag is the main forum of democratic discussion and the **representative assembly of the whole people**. In Parliament (from the French *parler*, to speak), political ideas and opinions are pitted against each other under the public gaze. In contrast to talk shows, the debate in the German Bundestag is not a form of entertainment or an end in itself, for the Bundestag ultimately has to take decisions that are binding on everyone.

Left: Plenary chamber of the German Bundestag.

Votes on legislative bills are often **strategic decisions** that have a profound impact on every aspect of public life. For this reason, the Members of Parliament never cease addressing burning social issues and debating important problems with long-term implications such as the possibilities of genetic engineering, the involvement of the Bundeswehr in combat missions or the question of euthanasia. In historic debates—on rearmament, on facing up to Germany's National Socialist past, on the treaties with countries of Eastern Europe and on German unification—the Bundestag has established its credentials as the representative body for all Germans.

These **great moments in the annals of the Bundestag** with their historic speeches have not gone unnoticed in the rest of the world. The international repute in which Germany's supreme representative forum is held can be seen in the list of those who have visited and addressed the Bundestag. In recent years, leading political representatives from all parts of the world, such as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, US President George W. Bush and President Jacques Chirac of France, have been guest speakers in the German Bundestag.



Members gathered on the parliamentary-group level of the Bundestag building.

Members of Parliament —Envoys of the people—

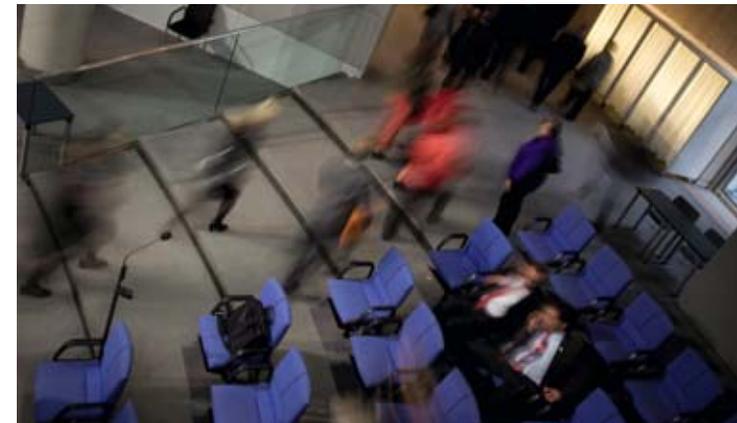
Is membership of the Bundestag an occupation like any other? Certainly not, for Members of Parliament are temporary envoys who must seek a vote of approval from the electorate at each general election. They have a mandate, or commission, to represent the citizens to the best of their ability. As Members of the German Bundestag they hold a high public office, which gives them certain rights but which also requires them to comply with many rules.

In principle, any person aged 18 or over who is eligible to vote in the Federal Republic of Germany may stand as a candidate for election to the Bundestag. Candidates are normally put forward by a party whose political aims they share. This allegiance to a party and its parliamentary group influences their political activity.

Freedom of conscience and cooperation



Without parliamentary groups the Bundestag would fragment into hundreds of individual interests. Parliamentary work is extremely complex and specialised, which makes consultation and coordination imperative. This is the task of the parliamentary groups. They have their own parliamentary rights, such as the right to introduce bills and motions, to demand a debate on a matter of topical interest or a roll-call vote in plenary and to address major and minor parliamentary questions to the Federal Government. None of the 622 Members of the German Bundestag can be forced to subscribe to the opinion of his or her parliamentary group. This principle is laid down in Article 38 of the Basic Law, which guarantees the free exercise of a mandate. It states that Members of the Bundestag are representatives of the whole people, not bound by orders or instructions and subject only to their conscience. This freedom has frequently been in evidence, chiefly in connection with particularly momentous decisions, such as those on military missions, on the choice of capital city and seat of government in 1991 and on matters relating to the regulation of abortion and genetic engineering.





Experience, knowledge and political know-how help Members to exert influence and have their views listened to within their parliamentary groups. In group bodies and parliamentary committees, and of course in plenary votes, the individual makes his or her political position count. Even Members who do not belong to a parliamentary group, besides being entitled to speak and vote in plenary, have numerous rights that no majority can deny them. For example, in plenary debates they can move points of order and table amendments, make declarations of vote, put questions to the Federal Government and be a non-voting member of a parliamentary committee.



Voting cards for roll-call votes (above); urn in which Members deposit their voting cards (below).

Between Parliament and constituency

Members of Parliament normally have two places of work: the Bundestag and their constituency. Regardless of whether they were elected to the Bundestag as constituency Members or from a regional list, they look after their constituents. They engage with the public, are frequently involved in local politics and report on their parliamentary activities. In regular surgery sessions, they



learn of the problems and interests of local people and feed this knowledge into their deliberations in Berlin.

Constituency interests are not sold short in Berlin either. Although Members have a particularly tight schedule in the weeks when Parliament is sitting, every parliamentary group has regional subgroups in which Members discuss the political interests of their federal state and local area.

No time for a media circus

There is a widespread myth that Members of Parliament spend their time moving from one talk show to another. Television viewers are often irritated too when they see a sitting of the Bundestag with the chamber only half full. The public are largely unaware of the wide range of tasks a parliamentarian has to perform. Day after day legislative bills, amendment motions, parliamentary questions and government replies, as well as opinions and reports on topical issues, appear on each Member's desk. The bulk of Parliament's legislative work is actually done in committee.



Printed papers laid out near the entrance to the plenary chamber.

Members' offices have a floor area of about 18 square metres.





There are about 10,000 new printed papers in an electoral term. They must be read, processed, discussed at meetings of working parties, parliamentary groups and committees and, in many cases, culminate in a parliamentary decision. Instead of holding speeches, Members often meet behind the scenes to discuss compromises and determine the best line of approach.



Signing the attendance register before a meeting of a parliamentary group (above); at a meeting of the Bundestag Committee on Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (below).

Sitting weeks in Berlin

If it is to run smoothly, the work to be performed in a sitting week needs a clear basic structure and a fixed timetable. After returning from their constituencies, the Members of Parliament prepare with their staff on Monday for the parliamentary week, determining their activities and priorities. On Monday afternoon the parliamentary group executives and the executive bodies of the parties hold meetings. On Tuesday the parliamentary groups convene to discuss their political approach to the items on the agenda. Before the morning is over, the groups' working parties also meet to prepare for the meetings of the parliamentary committees, which normally take place on Wednesdays. The 22 permanent committees, whose members are drawn from all the

parliamentary groups, are the bodies that perform the specialised work of Parliament. At the committee meetings the groups present their views on legislative proposals, thrash out compromises and prepare drafts designed to attract majority support. These are then discussed and put to the vote in the public plenary sittings on Thursday and Friday.

A heavy schedule

The fixed timetable for a sitting week is the framework for parliamentary activity. A Member's involvement in meetings of parliamentary groups and committees and in plenary sessions is supplemented by many other appointments, such as specialised conferences, lectures and talks with the press or with representative associations. In addition, many groups of visitors or parties of schoolchildren come up from the constituency and naturally wish to meet their own Member of the Bundestag. Anyone passing the Members' offices late at night will see light coming from many windows. Members of Parliament often have to wait until the end of their official engagements before they find time to study draft legislation or work on the text of a speech.

The rostrum (above) and rows of Members' seats (below) in the plenary chamber.





A well-filled file:
work in progress
in a Member's
office.

Terms of employment

The temporary nature of membership of Parliament dictates that a person's career must not be impaired if he or she is elected to Parliament and performs his or her wide-ranging tasks in a responsible manner. For this reason, all Members of the Bundestag are entitled to what are known as monetary allowances and benefits in kind, namely a furnished and equipped office in the Bundestag, telecommunications facilities and the right to use domestic transport services in the performance of their official duties.

These benefits are supplemented by a flat-rate expenses allowance, from which a Member of the Bundestag meets the cost of maintaining a constituency office and a second residence in Berlin, for example. A staffing allowance enables Members to pay their employees—research assistants and office staff—in Berlin and in their constituency office. Their own pay—known as Members' remuneration—is taxable.

Right: Meeting
of the Budget
Committee.

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/members17



A typical sitting week in the Bundestag

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning		8-9 Meeting	8-9 Press briefing	8-9 Office work	
9 a.m.	From 9 a.m.: travelling from constituency	9-12: Meetings of working groups and working parties	9-1: Committee meeting	From 9 a.m.: Plenary sitting (until late evening); peak-time debate (2-3.30 p.m.) with, for example, government policy statement followed by debate and possibly debate on a matter of topical interest	From 9 a.m.: Plenary sitting (until afternoon)
10 a.m.					
11 a.m.					
12 noon	12-1: Office meeting/ staff meeting	12-1: Meeting of project group, parliamentary friendship group, etc.	1-3.35 or 4.45: Plenary sitting with questions to the Federal Government, Question Time and, if required, debate on a matter of topical interest	At the same time: Group of visitors from constituency, press interview, office work	
Afternoon	1-3: Office work (correspondence, weekly plan)	1-3: Preparation for committee meeting	Office meeting, office work		
2 p.m.	3-5: Preparation for sitting and/or meetings of working groups and working parties		Continuation of committee meeting or meeting of subcommittee	in exceptional cases, meetings of administrative bodies	
3 p.m.	3-5: Meeting of group executive	3-6: Meeting of parliamentary group			3-4: Press briefing/ meetings with representatives of associations and with researchers
4 p.m.					4 p.m. Departure for constituency
5 p.m.	5-7: Political talks				
Evening	7-9: Meeting of Land group	Evening events (panel discussions, lectures)	Group of visitors from constituency	Meetings of working groups and working parties	7-9: Evening event in constituency

Parliamentary elections

In a democracy, the power of the state emanates from the people. It is the voters who determine policies, lending their power for a limited period to the representatives of the people. Who governs the country and makes the laws depends on two crosses that the electorate make on their ballot papers. In the elections to the 17th German Bundestag on 27 September 2009, all German citizens who had reached their 18th birthday by election day were eligible to vote. Any German national aged 18 or over can stand as a candidate. Those who are elected to the Bundestag are said to have received a **mandate** from the people. The word comes from the Latin *mandatum*, meaning an instruction or commission. They represent the people until a new Bundestag is elected. At every parliamentary election, voters have two choices to make. With their **first vote**, they choose the person whom they wish to be their personal representative in Berlin. Every candidate who wins the largest share of the vote in his or her constituency is directly elected to the Bundestag. The Federal Republic is divided into 299 constituencies. What determines the balance of power

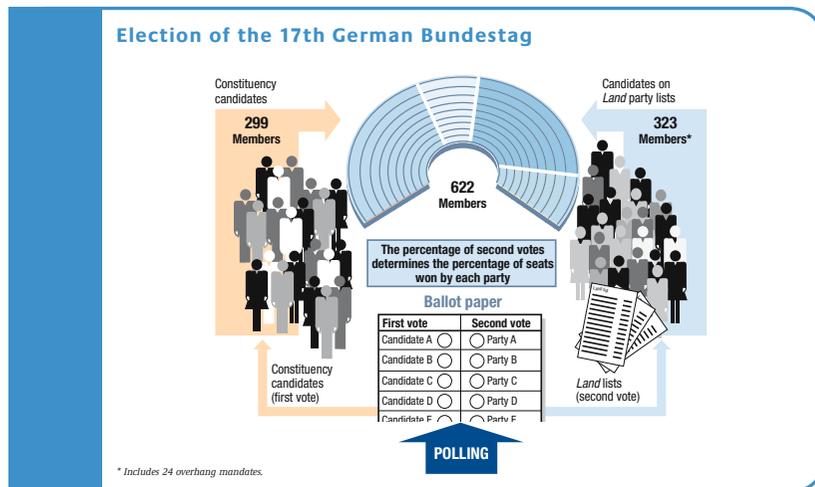
between parties in the Bundestag is the **second vote**. By making this cross on their ballot papers, voters determine which party or coalition will win a large enough share of the vote to elect one of its members to serve as Federal Chancellor. Every party can campaign for seats in the Bundestag by drawing up **Land lists** of candidates. The party submits a list in one or more federal states (*Länder*) listing its candidates for the state in order of preference. If a party wins enough second votes in a given *Land* to merit the allocation of ten seats and has won four constituency seats in that *Land*, the party's top six list candidates take the remaining six seats.

Parties campaigning in an election are subject, however, to the **5% hurdle**, whereby a party must win at least five per cent of the national vote in order to enter the Bundestag. There is one exception: if a party wins at least three constituency seats, it enters Parliament with the number of seats corresponding to its percentage of second votes even if it falls short of the 5% threshold. This threshold aims to prevent a splintering of the party system that might weaken Parliament. In principle, half of the seats in the Bundestag are distributed on the basis of the *Land* lists, while the other half are constituency seats. This, however, accounts for only 598 of the 622 seats in the 17th Bundestag. The remaining 24 seats result from what are known as overhang mandates, which were won by the CDU in certain *Länder* and by the CSU in Bavaria. An overhang mandate occurs when the number of constituency seats won by a party in a particular *Land* exceeds the number of seats to which it would be entitled on the strength of the second vote. If, for example, a party wins enough second votes to merit the allocation of 15 seats but its candidates secure the largest share of the vote in 17 constituencies, it obtains 17 parliamentary seats. After all, each of the 17 candidates has been directly elected. This situation would create two extra seats, or overhang mandates, in the Bundestag.

>> www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en



Television cameras in front of the Reichstag Building (above); Federal Returning Officer Roderich Egeler (below).

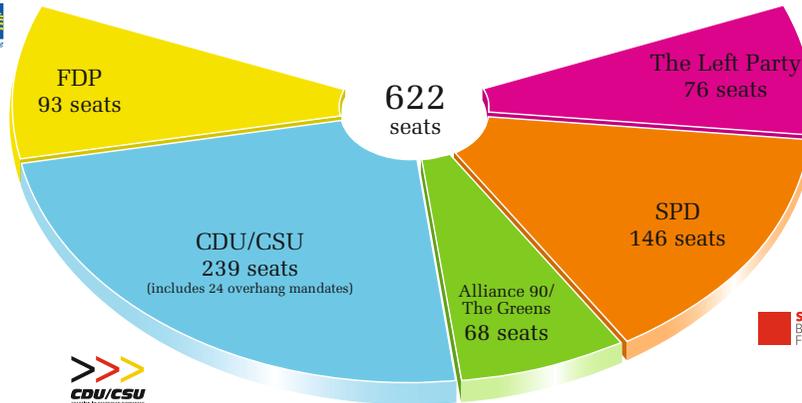


German Bundestag – 17th electoral term

Distribution of seats and group chairpersons



Birgit Homburger
(FDP)



Gregor Gysi
(The Left Party)



Volker Kauder
(CDU/CSU)



Jürgen Trittin
(Alliance 90/The Greens)



Renate Künast
(Alliance 90/The Greens)



Frank-Walter Steinmeier
(SPD)

Details as of January 2010



During the constituent sitting on 27 October 2009.

The German Bundestag —17th electoral term—

The election of the German Bundestag for its 17th electoral term brought considerable changes in the composition of Parliament. The CDU and CSU parties, which traditionally form a single parliamentary group, won 239 seats—an increase of 13—while the SPD won 146 seats—76 fewer than in 2005. The third-largest parliamentary group in the Bundestag is that of the FDP, with 93 seats (up by 32), The Left Party has 76 seats (22 more than in 2005), and Alliance 90/The Greens has 68 seats—an increase of 17.

Although the incumbent coalition of CDU, CSU and SPD did not lose its parliamentary majority in the elections of 27 September 2009, the CDU and CSU were also able to command a majority by coalescing with the FDP, and this is what they did to form the new Government. On 28 October 2009, Angela Merkel of the CDU/CSU group was re-elected to the office of Federal Chancellor.

Of the 622 Members of the Bundestag, 203 (32%) are newcomers. The remaining 419 have already served in the Bundestag. The average age at the start of the electoral term was about 49. Fourteen Members were younger than 30. The age range covers several generations: the youngest Member, 23-year-old Florian Bernschneider of the FDP group, is all of 51 years younger than the President by age, Heinz Riesenhuber of the CDU. Women make up about 32.8% of the membership of the Bundestag, a ratio which has scarcely changed since the last electoral term.

Members' trades and professions

It is commonly asserted that many teachers are drawn to a career in politics. Only 27 of them, however, are in the 17th Bundestag. Lawyers, with 98 representatives, constitute the largest occupational category. A total of 39 Members possess engineering qualifications, and 37 are qualified in economics or business management. Other occupations are represented too, with one miner, three computer specialists and nine physicians. Three were previously ministers of the church, six are still studying, two give their occupation as artists, and one Member is a concert pianist.

More than half of the Members of Parliament, namely 350, give their occupation as representatives of the people, which goes to show that the time and effort involved in political activity can soon make it a full-time occupation.

President by age
Heinz Riesenhuber (above); Bundestag President Norbert Lammert (middle); Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel congratulates Norbert Lammert on his re-election (below).



Sources: Federal Returning Officer and *Kürschners Volkshandbuch*.

The main organs of the Bundestag and other Bundestag bodies



The seat from which sittings of the Bundestag are chaired.

The Presidium

The President of the Bundestag and his deputies form the Presidium, which is elected for the duration of an electoral term. A member of the Presidium cannot be relieved of his or her office by a resolution of the Bundestag. The Presidium meets regularly in every sitting week to discuss matters pertaining to the management of the House. For the 17th electoral term, Norbert Lammert (CDU/CSU) was elected President of the Bundestag. His Vice-Presidents are Wolfgang Thierse (SPD), Gerda Hasselfeldt (CDU/CSU), Hermann Otto Solms (FDP), Petra Pau (The Left Party) and Katrin Göring-Eckardt (Alliance 90/The Greens)

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/presidium



Norbert Lammert, President of the Bundestag.

President of the Bundestag

The President of the Bundestag is the chief officer of Parliament who safeguards the rights of Parliament, represents it externally and heads the administration of the Bundestag. He or she is elected for the duration of the electoral term and chairs the plenary sittings in rotation with the Vice-Presidents. If a Member of the Bundestag infringes the code of parliamentary conduct, the President may issue a reprimand or a call to order, withdraw the Member's right to speak or suspend him or her from sittings and committee meetings for up to 30 sitting days. Norbert Lammert (CDU/CSU) was elected President of the Bundestag for its 17th electoral term.

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/presidium

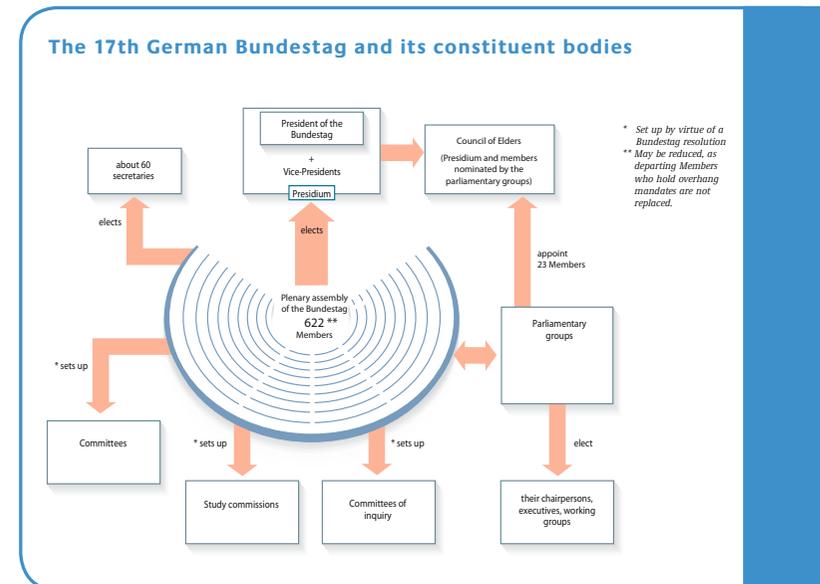
Council of Elders

The Council of Elders comprises the members of the Presidium of the Bundestag and 23 other members appointed by the parliamentary groups on the basis of their relative numerical strength. Meetings of the Council of Elders are also attended by a representative of the Federal Government. The Council of Elders assists the President of the Bundestag in the performance of his or her duties and takes decisions on the internal affairs of the Bundestag, except where such matters are reserved for the President or the Presidium. The Council of Elders lays down the dates of plenary sitting weeks quite a long time in advance and sets the daily agendas at short notice.

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/elders



Meeting of the Council of Elders.





Committee room
in the Paul Löbe
Building.

Committees

The Bundestag appoints committees to prepare its resolutions. In the 17th Bundestag there are 22 permanent committees. Their remits generally match the portfolios of the various government ministries. There are exceptions, such as the Committee for the Scrutiny of Elections, Immunity and the Rules of Procedure, the Petitions Committee, the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, the Committee on Tourism and the Sports Committee. As a rule, the committees do not meet in public. The Basic Law prescribes the appointment of a Defence Committee, a Committee on Foreign Affairs, a Committee on the Affairs of the European Union and a Petitions Committee.

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/committees



Meeting of the
committee of
inquiry into alle-
gations concern-
ing the issuing of
visas during the
15th electoral
term.

Committees of inquiry

Under Article 44 of the Basic Law, the Bundestag can appoint a committee of inquiry. It is required to do so on the motion of one quarter of its Members. The main function of the committee of inquiry is to investigate possible abuses in government and administration and possible misconduct, for example by members of the Government. It can hear witnesses and experts and can require the executive to submit files for its perusal. The committee of inquiry sets out its findings in a report to Parliament, which is considered in plenary. In order to guarantee effective parliamentary scrutiny of the armed forces, the Defence Committee is entitled to constitute itself as a committee of inquiry at any time.

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/committees/inquiry

Study commissions

On the motion of a quarter of its Members, the German Bundestag is bound to appoint a study commission to prepare decisions on wide-ranging and significant issues. Study commissions comprise Members of the

Bundestag and external experts. They submit reports and recommendations to the Bundestag.

>> http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/committees/bodies/study

Petitions Committee

The law on petitions provides everyone in the Federal Republic of Germany with a means of direct recourse to Parliament. The right of petition is a fundamental right that has been enshrined in the Basic Law since 1949. Requests or complaints to the Bundestag are dealt with by the Petitions Committee, which examines and discusses the petitions. In this way, the members of the Petitions Committee learn at first hand how legislation affects ordinary people. Among the options open to the Committee is referral of a petition to the Federal Government for action, consideration or information.

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/committees/a02

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces

Every member of the armed forces is free to address complaints direct to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces without going through service channels. As a rule, the Commissioner always acts upon learning of circumstances that seem to indicate a breach of the fundamental rights of military personnel. The Commissioner investigates particular occurrences on the instructions of the Bundestag or its Defence Committee or acts on his own initiative. In this way, the Commissioner for the Armed Forces functions as an auxiliary organ of the Bundestag for the purpose of parliamentary control of the armed forces. The Commissioner reports to the Bundestag once a year on the results of his work.

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/commissioner



Reinhold Robbe,
Parliamentary
Commissioner
for the Armed
Forces, visiting
Bundeswehr
troops.

What you always wanted to know about the Bundestag

What do Members of the Bundestag cost?

No more than a cinema ticket! The annual budget of the Bundestag normally amounts to between 540 and 560 million euros. This covers Members' remuneration, expense allowances, pensions, travel expenses, staff pay, building overheads and many more costs. Divided by the population of Germany, this works out at about seven euros per head. The taxable monthly remuneration paid to each Member has amounted to €7,668 since 1 January 2009; to this is added a non-taxable flat-rate expenses allowance, which will amount to €3,969 from 1 January 2010. If the *per capita* cost were based on these two figures alone, it would come to about one euro a year. Perhaps the question should be put this way: how much is democracy worth to us?

Members' offices
in the Paul Löbe
Building.



Why is the plenary chamber rarely full?

Because the Members are working in other parts of the Bundestag. The Bundestag could not begin to accomplish all of its many tasks if all Members were present in the chamber throughout every sitting. Applying the principle of division of labour, they organise themselves into committees, subcommittees and working groups. In addition, there are numerous appointments to be kept with experts, members of the public and journalists. A Member of the Bundestag needs to be in the chamber when the agenda includes items that are relevant to a committee on which the Member serves or to the constituency he or she represents. Besides, the in-house television service keeps Members constantly in touch with proceedings in the chamber.

What does *Hammelsprung* mean?

It refers to a special form of vote in which division doors are used. If the presiding team cannot agree on the result of an open vote in the House, for example a vote in which Members are required to stand up or a vote taken on a show of hands, the division doors are used. This means that all Members leave the chamber and re-enter by one of three doors (ayes, nos and abstentions). Secretaries are there to take an exact count of all the voting Members in order to obtain a clear result. *Hammelsprung* literally means "wethers' leap" and refers to a picture above a division door in the old Reichstag, depicting the one-eyed giant (Cyclops) Polyphemus from Greek mythology counting his sheep as he lets them out to pasture.

What is immunity?

A special rule designed to protect the proper working of Parliament, whereby criminal investigations or a formal charge may only be made against individual Members of the Bundestag with the consent of the House, except in cases where the Member is arrested while committing a criminal offence or on the following day. Immunity



Parliamentary
television trans-
mits the plenary
debates.



The Members of the Bundestag Act (Abgeordnetengesetz) regulates Members' legal status.

Members of the Bundesrat have the right to address the Bundestag. Pictured here is Peter Harry Carstensen, Minister President of Schleswig-Holstein.

is limited to the duration of a person's membership of the Bundestag. In practice, the Bundestag has rarely withheld its consent to investigations or charges.

Who is allowed to speak in the Bundestag?

In principle, only the Members of the Bundestag, members of the Federal Government and representatives of the Bundesrat. To ensure that deliberations do not degenerate into an unending babble, the Council of Elders, in setting the agenda, also determines the duration of each debate and hence the maximum speaking times. The larger a parliamentary group, the more speaking time it is allocated and the greater the number of its Members who are allowed to take the floor. The individuals who address the House during the allotted speaking time are selected by the parliamentary groups themselves. The CDU/CSU group has 23 minutes per hour, the SPD 14 minutes, and the FDP, Alliance 90/The Greens and The Left Party seven minutes each. The President or his deputy in the chair takes great care to ensure that maximum speaking times are adhered to and that the two sides of an argument are presented in turn and may also cut off any Member who exceeds his or her speaking time, in other words switch off the microphone on the rostrum.



Why is the Bundestag called the Reichstag?

It is not! Although the seat of the Bundestag is the Reichstag Building, its correct title is the German Bundestag. From 1894 to 1933, this building was the venue for the sittings of the Reichstag, the Parliament of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic. After the Second World War, the people of Berlin continued to refer to the building as the 'Reichstag', even though the *Reich* had long since ceased to exist.

The Reichstag Building in the early 1920s.





Reichstag Building
viewed from the
west.

The Reichstag Building with the plenary chamber

An imposing building with monumental façades, the Reichstag has an immediate powerful effect on the beholder. Entering the building, its visitors find a modern interior equipped with state-of-the-art technology. The British architect Lord Norman Foster managed to preserve the historic shell of the Reichstag Building while creating the interior space for a modern, outward-looking Parliament.

‘Transparent and functional’ is how the clear division of the building into levels or floors can best be described. The basement and ground floor contain facilities belonging to the Parliamentary Secretariat and the technical building services as well as supply installations. Above them, on the first floor, is the plenary level with the main debating chamber. Next comes the intermediate visitors’ level, and the following floor is the presidential level. Above this is the area occupied by the parliamentary groups, and finally there are the roof terrace and the spectacular Reichstag dome.

Modern building materials create transparency: light steel frameworks and large glass surfaces, fair-faced

concrete and matt-white or beige-coloured natural stone, which lend the building, in spite of its massive bulk, a lightweight, silver-shimmering flair. Vertical orientation is made easier by the colour scheme employed by Danish artist Per Arnoldi, whereby each level is distinguishable by the colour of the doors.



Eastern foyer of
the Reichstag
Building.

Insight into parliamentary proceedings

Visitors also benefit from the transparency and functionality of the whole building. At the visitors’ entrance to the Reichstag Building, through the main portico on the western façade, only a few steps separate the mighty pillars from the towering entrance hall, from where the plenary chamber, the very heart of the building, is already visible behind a glass wall. Here, on the plenary level, the first floor above street level, is the core area of Parliament. This level, on which the doors are painted blue, is reserved for the Members of the Bundestag, their staff, members of the Federal Government and, in the western lobby, representatives of the media. All around the plenary chamber there is room for the parliamentary activity that takes place outside the chamber. First of all, there are the lobbies,

The plenary
chamber in
the Reichstag
Building.





The Members' lobby.

which are the scene of fringe discussions and interviews, along with a reference library. All of the current parliamentary printed papers are laid out on the reception tables in the eastern lobby, where there are also lounges for Government members and a counting room for votes by roll call or secret ballot.

The focal point, however, is always the plenary chamber of Parliament. Measuring 24 metres from floor to ceiling, it covers virtually the full height of the building and is visible from almost all the floor levels of the surrounding structure as well as from the inner courtyards and from many other angles. The chamber, with its floor area of 1,200 square metres, is not only the heart of the Reichstag Building; it is ultimately the centre of parliamentary democracy in Germany.

Plenary chamber and seating plan

For visitors to plenary sittings, a mezzanine floor was constructed above the plenary level. On this visitors' level, people can walk round the outside of the plenary chamber and also have an unhindered view of the lobby from above. The visitors' gallery in the plenary chamber provides an excellent view of the Members of the Bundestag at work. Six tribunes arranged in a semi-ellipse offer a total of about 450 seats for visitors, official guests of the Bundestag and journalists. From these tribunes the visitor's eye is drawn straight to the glazed wall behind the podium where the large federal eagle is suspended. At its feet are the seats of those who preside over the sitting, namely the President (Speaker) of the German Bundestag or one of his or her deputies and the



The federal eagle in the chamber of the Bundestag (above); visitors in the visitors' gallery (below).



Chronology of the Reichstag Building

5 December 1894: Opening ceremony for the new Reichstag Building at the end of a ten-year construction process. The architect was Paul Wallot.

9 November 1918: Philipp Scheidemann (SPD) proclaimed the German Republic from a window of the Reichstag Building after Imperial Chancellor Prince Max of Baden, acting on his own authority, had announced the abdication of Emperor William II at noon on the same day.

27 February 1933: Shortly after Adolf Hitler came to power, the Reichstag fire signalled the end of parliamentary democracy in Germany and served as a pretext for the persecution of political opponents.

May 1945: At the end of the Second World War, the red flag of the Soviet army was flown above the Reichstag Building as a sign of victory over National Socialist Germany.

9 September 1948: More than 350,000 Berliners gathered for a demonstration in front of the Reichstag Building during the Soviet blockade of Berlin. Against the backdrop of the severely damaged edifice, Ernst Reuter, Mayor of Berlin, delivered his famous appeal: "Peoples of the world, ... look at this city".

13 August 1961: The Berlin Wall was built, part of it running right next to the Reichstag Building. Nevertheless, the restoration of the building was completed; from 1973, it served as the home of an exhibition on German history and provided meeting rooms for parliamentary groups and other bodies.

4 October 1990: The first Bundestag elected by the whole of Germany held its inaugural sitting in the Reichstag Building.

20 June 1991: The Bundestag in Bonn decided by 338 votes to 320 to establish its future seat in the Reichstag Building in Berlin. Following an architectural competition, Sir Norman Foster was commissioned to reconstruct the building. In May 1995, after some stormy debates, the Council of Elders opted for the construction of a modern glass dome with integrated walkways.

24 June to 6 July 1995: Artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude wrapped the Reichstag Building in fabric, turning it into an art work that attracted some five million visitors. At the end of this art event, the reconstruction of the building began.

19 April 1999: The handover ceremony took place at the Reichstag Building. Sir Norman Foster presented Wolfgang Thierse, President of the Bundestag, with a symbolic key to the building. In the summer of 1999, the Bundestag moved from Bonn to Berlin. The first week of the new session of Parliament in Berlin began on 6 September.





The government benches (above); the Bundesrat benches, with the presiding team seated on the left of the picture (below).

two secretaries, who are Members from different parliamentary groups. In front of them is the podium and the shorthand writers' bench. On the left of the President or Acting President, as seen from the visitors' tribunes, are the government benches, while the benches to the right of the President are for the representatives of the Bundesrat. Lastly, between the Bundesrat benches and the President sits the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. Facing the presidential rostrum are the Members' seats, arranged by parliamentary group. From the President's perspective, the first group on the right is the FDP. Then comes the parliamentary group of the CDU/CSU and then, in the centre, Alliance 90/The Greens. To the left of them are the SPD, while the seats for the parliamentary group of The Left Party are on the far left. This arrangement of the political groups dates back to the time of the French Revolution, when seating arrangements gave birth to the use of the terms 'right' and 'left' to describe political leanings.

At the visitors' level, recognisable by its dark-green doors, there are also lecture theatres and information rooms for talks between Members and their visitors.

The Presidium and the political groups

Above the visitors' level, on the second floor with its burgundy doors, are the offices of important decision-makers, namely the President of the Bundestag and his staff and the senior management of the Bundestag administration, and, most importantly, the meeting room of the Council of Elders. There is not enough space in the Reichstag Building itself to accommodate the offices of the Members of the Bundestag, the parliamentary committees and other bodies. The parliamentary groups, however, do have their own permanent meeting places on the third floor, which is distinguishable by its grey doors. The meeting rooms of the parliamentary groups, the premises of the group executives and their



One of the towers of the Reichstag Building.

ante-rooms are grouped around an extensive press lobby, which can also be used for receptions. While the CDU/CSU and SPD groups meet in rooms on the east side of the group level, the FDP, The Left Party and Alliance 90/The Greens have their accommodation on the west side. The premises of the parliamentary groups include the four corner towers of the Reichstag Building. The square floor plan and exceptional height of these rooms give them a particularly striking appearance.

The Reichstag dome: a magnet for visitors

Above the third floor where the parliamentary groups have their rooms stretches the extensive roof terrace, to which visitors are transported by means of two lifts. Here they have access to the restaurant, situated 30 metres above street level. Anyone wishing to enjoy an even more appealing panoramic view of Berlin from a height of 47 metres can walk up a gently spiralling ramp, 230 metres in length, to the viewing platform in the crown of the glass cupola, which has a diameter of 40 metres at its base. The platform offers an incomparable all-round view of Berlin. The cupola is open at the top and bottom, which makes it appear like a floating spatial shell with its vertex 54 metres above street level. The cone-shaped funnel at its core, its 360 mirrors deflecting daylight, with the aid of an anti-glare shield, into the plenary chamber, adds to the impression of lightness and cosmopolitanism.

From the base of the cupola, visitors can also look down into the plenary chamber. Regardless of whether they view it from here or from the visitor tribunes that project far into the chamber, the fact remains that the German Bundestag in the Reichstag Building is wide open to visitors, and this is one of the ways that it honours the pledge made in large lettering mounted on the pediment above the main portico on the western façade, spelling out the dedication of the building to the German people (*DEM DEUTSCHEN VOLKE*).

Visitors heading towards the viewing platform (above); western portico with inscription (below).





Environmentalism on the sunny side

The Reichstag Building and the surrounding Bundestag edifices are equipped with environmentally sensitive low-energy technology. The energy-saving strategy formulated by the Bundestag and the Federal Government has been successfully incorporated into the complex of new and refurbished buildings.

In the Reichstag Building, the cone-shaped light sculptor with its 360 mirrors at the core of the glass cupola funnels daylight into the plenary chamber. Concealed within this cone, a heat-recovery system operates, using energy from the spent air rising from the plenary chamber for the heating of the building. On the south-facing roof of the building, 300 square metres of solar panels serve as a clean source of electricity. Similar photovoltaic systems are fitted to the roofs of the Paul Löbe and Jakob Kaiser Buildings.

At the heart of the environmental strategy are the central combined heat and power (CHP) plants in the parliamentary quarter. Their generators run on biodiesel produced from rapeseed.

In accordance with the trigeneration principle, waste heat created by electricity generation is used to heat the parliament buildings. This technology enables the plants to generate about half of the electricity needed for the parliament buildings and meet all of their heating and cooling requirements.

Another advantage is that unused waste heat can be used for cooling purposes in an absorption chiller or can be stored in summer in a layer of porous rock 300 metres below the surface in the form of warm water and pumped up again in winter.

>> www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/artandhistory/architecture/energy

The Paul Löbe Building

Only a stone's throw from the Reichstag is the building named after the last democratic President of the Reichstag in the Weimar Republic, the Social Democrat Paul Löbe, a bright and spacious building with long façades in the *Spreebogen*, the northward bulge in the course of the River Spree. The Paul Löbe Building is part of the ribbon of federal buildings that stretches across the Spree and across the former division between East and West Berlin. This ribbon comprises the Federal Chancellery and the Paul Löbe Building on the west bank of the river and the Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building on the east bank. The Paul Löbe Building, some 200 metres in length and 100 metres in breadth, is primarily the venue for the work of the parliamentary committees, whose two-storeyed meeting rooms are housed in eight rotundas. The arrangement is reminiscent of the cylinders of an engine, and not without reason, for the committee meetings are ultimately the engine rooms where the technical work is done, providing the basis on which the House is able to take its decisions. The Paul Löbe Building also has about 510 rooms for 170 Members of the Bundestag, 450 offices for committee secretariats and administrative departments, such as the Public Relations Division and the Visitors' Service. The Federal Chancellery is reflected in the vast glass frontage on the west side of the Paul Löbe Building, symbolising as it were the interplay of Parliament and Government.



Committee room in the Paul Löbe Building.

View of the imposing glass frontage from the west.





Illuminated meeting rooms in the Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building.

The Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building

The new Bundestag building bearing the name of the Liberal politician Marie-Elisabeth Lüders contains the large library, the archives, the Press Documentation Division and the Research Services, which effectively makes it the parliamentary information and service centre. From the Spreeplatz on the east bank, a broad and slightly curved flight of steps leads down to the Spree. The inside of the building is bathed in the light that enters from the coffered ceiling. The particularly impressive part of this building is its core, the library rotunda at the western end of the main hall. The library in the Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building, with more than 1.3 million volumes, is the third-largest parliamentary library in the world. The archives are of inestimable value, containing a vast range of source material on the history of the Bundestag and the Federal Republic of Germany. Below the information and advice level of the library rotunda is a section of the Berlin Wall within an otherwise empty room. The piece of what was known as the hinterland wall follows the former course of that wall and is a reminder of the history of the site. The building is rounded off with a large hearing room, which is chiefly used by study commissions and committees of inquiry.

Open folio volume in the library.



The Jakob Kaiser Building

The largest of the new parliamentary buildings is the Jakob Kaiser Building, named after a politician who belonged to the Centre Party during the Weimar era and was one of the co-founders of the CDU. The main purpose of this building is to provide office accommodation for the parliamentary groups and their staff. The Jakob Kaiser Building, in which more than 2,000 people work, integrates existing architecture and incorporates elements of the old street plan, thereby preserving the traditions of urban development in Berlin. Five teams of architects worked on the building, which is actually a complex of eight structures. Although the building does not exceed the Berlin eaves height of 22 metres, it provides breathtaking views from its airy, glass-fronted upper storeys. Among the occupants of the Jakob Kaiser Building are the Vice-Presidents of the Bundestag, the shorthand writers, the Press Office and the Bundestag television centre and studio. Two meeting rooms are available for study commissions. Numerous Members of the Bundestag have their offices here; all of them have three rooms with a floor area of about 18 square metres each for themselves and their staff. The allocation of office space to the parliamentary groups is determined afresh by the Council of Elders' Commission on the Allocation of Rooms after each general election. As is the norm in the Bundestag, allocation is based strictly on the relative numerical strength of the groups.



Stairwell design in the Jakob Kaiser Building.

Jakob Kaiser Building viewed from the Spree.





Visiting the Bundestag

1. Roof terrace and dome of the Reichstag Building

The roof terrace and glass dome (cupola) offer incomparable views of Berlin's parliamentary and government quarter.

Opening times/access

- >> Daily from 8 a.m. to midnight (no prior booking; entrance free), last admission: 10 p.m.
- >> West portal, entrance on the right (West B); disabled access via entrance West C

Closure of the dome and roof terrace

Closures of the dome are announced on the Bundestag website at www.bundestag.de, on information notices at the entrances and, where possible, in the Berlin daily press; information about closures can also be obtained by telephone from the Visitors' Service.

Roof-terrace restaurant

The roof-terrace restaurant at the eastern end of the dome, overlooking the historical heart of Berlin, is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and from 6.30 p.m. until midnight. Access for guests who have reserved a table is through the entrance below and to the right of the west portal (West C). Reservations may be made by telephoning +49(0)30 226 29933 or by e-mailing kaeferreservierung.berlin@feinkost-kaefer.de.

2. Facilities offered by the Visitors' Service

For groups and individuals who wish to visit the German Bundestag in Berlin, the following types of visit are available free of charge:

- >> one-hour attendance at a plenary sitting in the visitors' gallery above the **plenary chamber**;
- >> **briefing session** in the visitors' gallery above the plenary chamber when the Bundestag is not sitting; visitors learn about the tasks, working methods and composition of the Bundestag and about the history and architecture of the Reichstag Building; on Tuesdays, the briefing is available in English at 12 noon and in French at 1 p.m.;
- >> **guided tours of the Reichstag Building** when the Bundestag is not sitting, with explanations of the tasks, working methods and composition of the Bundestag and of the history and architecture of the Reichstag Building;
- >> **guided tours of the art and architecture in the Bundestag** buildings at weekends and on public holidays (in the Reichstag Building, the Jakob Kaiser Building, the Paul Löbe Building or the Marie-Elisabeth Lüders Building);
- >> **guided tours of the buildings for foreign visitor groups**, available in several languages on request;