









## **Content**

Buildings with History 4	The Work of the Expert Committees	18
The State Parliament Building on the Rhine	The Plenary Chamber — Parliament on Display	22
A Symbol of Democracy 8	Electoral Role	24
On Behalf of the People	Legislation	26
Electing Members of Parliament	Control of the State Government	28
The Citizens' Hall	The Visitor Gallery	30
The Work of the Parliamentary Groups 16	The Reception Room — A Place for Encounters	34
Legal information	The Foyer — Forum for Diversity	38
Publisher: The President of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia, André Kuper Text and editorial work: Public Relations Department	Art in Parliament	40
Photos (unless otherwise stated) and photo editing: Bernd Schälte  Contact: Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen, Platz des Landtags 1, 40221 Düsseldorf  Telephone: 140(0)311 894 0. www.landtag neu de coffeetlichkeitestheitelandtag neu de	Visiting the State Parliament	42
	Visiting the State Parliament  Living History	



#### **Dear Fellow Citizens**,



The members of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia represent around 18 million people on the Rhine, Ruhr and Lippe. The State Parliament is the only constitutional body in North Rhine-Westphalia directly elected by its citizens. It is here that decisions are made that have a significant influence on how we live together.

195 members of parliament were elected in the State Parliament elections on 15 May 2022. They belong to one of the parliamentary groups – CDU (Christian Democratic Union), SPD (Social Democratic Party), Grüne (The

Greens), FDP (Free Democratic Party) and AfD (Alternative for Germany) and represent the interests of the people from 128 constituencies in North Rhine-Westphalia. They are all contacts for citizens in urban areas as well as those in towns and communities in the countryside. As part of the State Parliament, they determine laws, therefore shaping everyday life in our federal state. Regular topics in parliament include schools and universities, the police and penal system, local affairs, cultural, economic and environmental policy, as well as child care and the inclusion of people

with disabilities. Furthermore, the State Parliament adopts the budget of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and controls the State Government.

The State Parliament is also a building for its citizens. This is demonstrated by the unique, open architecture of the parliament building – and the large number of visitors: 70,000 people come to the building on the banks of the Rhine in Düsseldorf every year. The State Parliament offers tours and information programmes and opens its State Parliament Forum on many weekends throughout the year. Moreover, the Parliamentary History Building provides an exciting look back at the history of the State Parliament.

This brochure aims to give you a first insight into the State Parliament – into the workings of the constitutional body, its history, the building's architecture and the work of the members of parliament and parliamentary groups. We invite you to visit the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia in person – it's your building. We look forward to seeing you.

Kindest regards,

André Kuper

President of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia

## **Buildings with History**



The British military government appointed 200 members of parliament to the 1st State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Photo: NRW State Archive/Carl August Stachelscheid

Members of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia have been making political decisions on behalf of its citizens for more than 75 years. The State Parliament has been housed in the newly built parliament building on the banks of the Rhine since 1988. Before that, members of parliament met at historic locations in Düsseldorf, the capital of North Rhine-Westphalia.



The State Parliament met at the Düsseldorf Opera House on 2 October 1946 — a historic day for North Rhine-Westphalia. Photo: NRW State Archive/Carl August Stachelscheid

The State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia met for its first session at the Düsseldorf Opera House on 2 October 1946. At that time, the first MPs were not yet elected by the citizens – they were appointed by the British military government, as was the first Minister President, the independent Rudolf Amelunxen. At that time, the State Parliament consisted of 100 members from each of the two former Prussian provinces of Rhineland and Westphalia. With Directive No. 46 of 23 August 1946, the northern part of the former Prussian Rhine Province and the province of Westphalia were united to form the new state of North Rhine-Westphalia as part of "Operation Marriage". The state of Lippe joined in January 1947.



Wilhelm Lenz, President of the State Parliament from 1970 to 1980, informs citizens, local parties and local history societies about building plans for the *Ständehaus* (March 1977).

Photo: Eva Tüsselmann



The Ständehaus in Düsseldorf was the seat of the State Parliament, seen here in a photo taken in 1985, for almost 40 years.

Photo: Achim Schüler

In just the second session, the Parliament moved to the *Henkelwerke* (Henkel Factories) premises in Düsseldorf. The Gesolei Hall – named after the 1926 exhibition for "Healthcare, social welfare and physical exercise" (*Gesundheitspflege, soziale Fürsorge und Leibesübungen*) – served as a temporary meeting place until 1949. The first free State Parliament elections in North Rhine-Westphalia took place on 20 April 1947. It was difficult to organise regular parliamentary work at the Henkel Factories in the long term. Local theatre groups used the hall for operettas and stage performances. British soldiers also convened there for film screenings. MPs had to sit in narrow rows on folding chairs – with all the necessary documents on their laps. There were no tables and no rooms for group or committee meetings.



Konrad Adenauer (1st row, left) was the first chairman of the CDU parliamentary group in the State Parliament. He later became the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Photo: NRW State Archive/Carl August Stachelscheid

The conference documents and furniture had to be transported to the hall for each session.

#### **Decisive years at the Ständehaus**

The State Parliament found a permanent home at the *Ständehaus* in Düsseldorf, in the building of the former Rhenish Provincial Diet. Reconstruction work on the building, which had been badly damaged in the Second World War, proved to be a costly undertaking. There was notably a shortage of labour and building materials. But on 15 March 1949, the State Parliament was finally able to begin its work at the *Ständehaus*.

The State Parliament met there for almost 40 years. Five Minister Presidents – Karl Arnold (CDU), Fritz Steinhoff (SPD), Franz Meyers (CDU), Heinz Kühn (SPD) and Johannes Rau (SPD) – were elected there by the members of the State Parliament. Important decisions for the further development of North Rhine-Westphalia were made at the *Ständehaus*.

#### New building on the Rhine

However, the growing demands of modern parliamentary work and the increasing diversity of tasks in state politics meant that there was also a greater shortage of space at the *Ständehaus*. At one time just 70 members of the Rhenish Provincial Diet met there – now the building had to provide space for the work of more than 200 MPs. After careful consideration, the State Parliament decided in the mid-1970s to call for tenders for an architectural competition for the extension. However, the designs submitted were met with public criticism.

An alternative presented itself – a new parliament building on the site of the disused Berger Harbour (*Berger Hafen*). On 30 April 1981, the Parliament's Main Committee decided to build the new parliament building directly on the banks of the Rhine – a building that would meet the requirements of a parliament close to the people and symbolise the transparency of parliamentary work through its unique architectural style.





## Rounded Off to a Tee The Parliament Building

The State Parliament building on the Rhine is a structure made up of round shapes. The round Plenary Chamber is a kind of fixed star, surrounded by other round halls and other parts of the building. Semicircular office areas wrap around the centre like a shell. The building opens up towards the centre. The State Parliament building is accessible to all citizens. The open forecourt around which the building curves invites people to enter the State Parliament through its glass doors.

## **A Symbol of Democracy**

Government action in a parliamentary democracy should be open and transparent. The State Parliament building expresses these expectations. Large window areas allow for a lot of transparency. The modern parliament building's open format illustrates respect for the citizens. The central Citizens' Hall (Bürgerhalle) is dedicated to them.





Scan the QR code for a virtual tour of the State

"If you are looking for an architectural design in which the true nature of democracy can be seen, you will find it in the shape of this building."

(DIE ZEIT 38/1988)

The State Parliament building on the banks of the Rhine is one of the most impressive new parliament buildings in German post-war history. Its circular architecture attracts thousands of visitors every year. Members of the North Rhine-Westphalian Parliament officially moved into the new building on 2 October 1988 – exactly 42 years to the day after the first session of Parliament at the Düsseldorf Opera House.

The nationwide competition was won by a concept from the architects Fritz Eller, Erich Maier, Robert Walter and Partners. They designed a building that would combine the necessary functionality of political work with the representative character of a modern parliament close to the people. After the grand opening in 1988, the population was able to take a closer look at the new State Parliament building for the first time. "I was accompanying the State Parliament President and stood among the crowd in the Visitor Gallery. We were both very happy on those days," architect Professor Fritz Eller (1927-2018) later recalled. "Our hopes were fulfilled after years of planning and building work – what we wanted to say with the architecture was understood. Great conditions were in our favour."

According to Eller, the location of the parliament building by the bridge *Rheinkniebrücke* gave a new impulse for urban development at the end of the great Rhine arch. Or, in other words: the Citizens' building blends into Düsseldorf's cityscape in a "remarkably unremarkable way". And yet the new State Parliament building is a building like no other. The idea that led to the building's design came from the MPs themselves. They wanted a circular Plenary Chamber. Everyone should be able to talk to everyone else from their seats in the Plenary Chamber. "We architects understood this as a mission and opted for a centred arrangement. The Plenary Chamber is the meaningful centre, it is the heart of the building', said Eller.

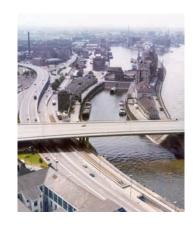
#### A space for encounters

All the rooms used for parliamentary business are arranged around this centre, for example, the area for the Executive Committee (*Präsidium*) with the State Parliament's Reception Room or the Foyer. The parliamentary groups' offices and the MPs' rooms surround the centre and encompass the building from the outside in a shell-like shape. This architecture provides both MPs and visitors with short walking distances. The Citizen's Hall, the large entrance and reception hall, is located on the ground floor; it has become a forum for citizens – for political, cultural and economic events as well as for social events and informal meetings with the MPs. "The Citizens' Hall is like a platform on which the building stands," said Eller, capturing the building's symbolism in a nutshell. The State Parliament building received an extension in 2012.

#### State of the art

Climate action, energy efficiency and sustainability are important issues for the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia. This is why the State Parliament building is always being carefully adapted in line with new developments in building technology. Energy supply, air-conditioning and heating technology regulation as well as lift construction and building protection are at the centre of these efforts. The building has a positive energy balance. In 2012, the State Parliament modernised the Plenary Chamber after being in use for 24 years and a total of around 5,500 session hours. Since then, the more than 700 square metre room has been accessible and equipped with new air-conditioning technology as well as new chairs and tables on a chair-track system.

The first picture shows the Berger Harbour in 1970 (photo: Kastner/Düsseldorf City Archive), the second picture the construction of the State Parliament in the 1980s, the third picture the building with its extension from 2012.





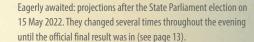


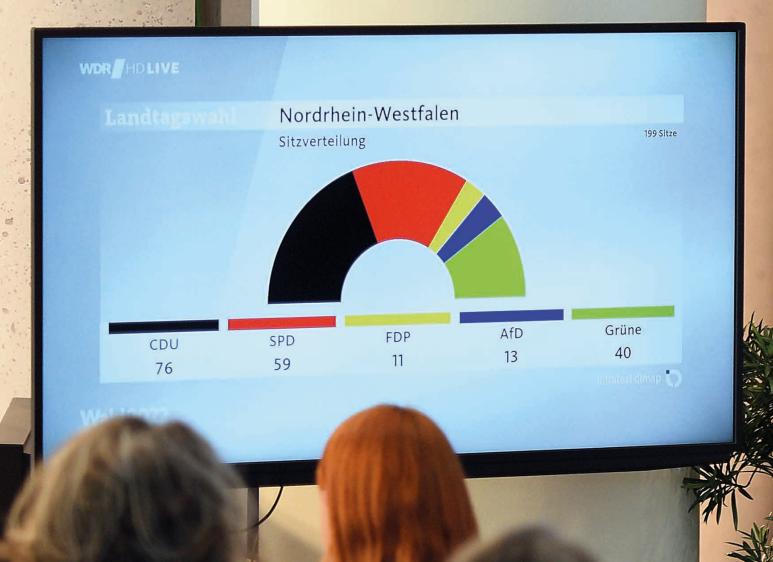


# On Behalf of the People Electing Members of Parliament

Every five years, hundreds of men and women run for office to shape policy on behalf of voters. All those elected must carry out their mandate in the State Parliament to the best of their knowledge and ability until the end of their fixed electoral term.

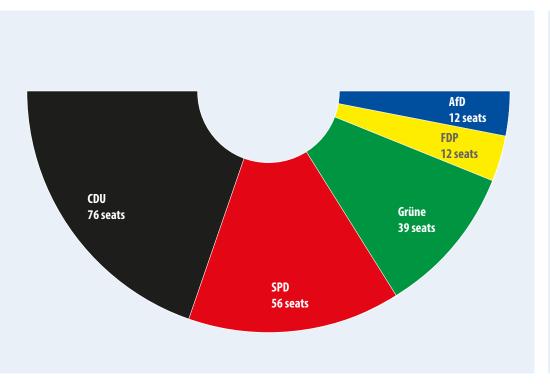


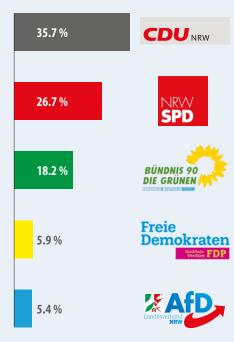




## **Electing Members of Parliament**

Those who want to have a say in politics have to vote. The composition of the State Parliament is an expression of the will of the voters. Each voter decides for themselves, freely and secretly, who should represent them in the State Parliament for five years.





The current distribution of seats in the NRW Parliament with 195 MPs As at: January 2024

Result of the State Parliament election on 15 May 2022 Source: NRW State Returning Officer

According to the state constitution, the State Parliament is the elected representation of the people in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Therefore, MPs get into Parliament via the State Parliament elections. Normally, citizens eligible to vote are called upon to elect a new State Parliament every five years. Anyone who is at least 18 years old, has German citizenship and has lived in North Rhine-Westphalia for at least 16 days is eligible to vote. This is set out in the State Electoral Act. All eligible voters who have lived in the federal state for at least three months on election day may stand for election themselves.

#### What is the composition of the State Parliament?

In the state election on 15 May 2022, around 13 million voters decided on the composition of the 18th State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia. A total of around 7.2 million citizens (55.5 percent of all eligible voters) filled out their ballot papers. Five parties managed to get over the five-percent hurdle into Parliament. The CDU achieved the strongest election result of all parties with 35.7 percent of the second votes. The SPD received 26.7 percent of the vote. The Grüne received 18.2 percent of the vote. The FDP achieved 5.9 percent of the second vote. The AfD received 5.4 percent of the vote. This gives the CDU 76 seats in the State Parliament, all of which it won via direct mandates. The SPD holds 56 seats. The Grüne has 39 MPs, the FDP twelve and the AfD twelve.

#### From the vote to Parliament

Eligible voters have two votes in the State Parliament election. The first vote is given to a candidate in the constituency. The second vote is given independently to one of the parties. Whoever wins the most first votes in the constituency is directly elected to the State Parliament (majority voting). Therefore, 128 MPs from all 128 constituencies enter parliament. The total number of seats their party is entitled to in the State Parliament is calculated according to the number of second votes the party has received. A proportionately high number of second votes equates to a proportionately high number of seats in the State Parliament (proportional representation). Therefore, this is referred to as personalised proportional representation. This means a combination of proportional and majority representation.

#### **List mandates**

If a party has fewer directly elected representatives than seats in the State Parliament, it fills the remaining seats with candidates from the Landesliste, a state list of party candidates. Parties without successful direct candidates immediately fall back on their state list. At least 53 more MPs enter parliament in this way. Since all directly elected candidates have a seat in the State Parliament, a party may sometimes occupy more seats than it is entitled to according to the results of the second votes (overhang seats). In this case, the State Parliament is expanded. In addition to the overhang seats, there are levelling seats for the other parties, as many as are necessary to re-establish the relative strength determined by the second votes. The State Parliament consists of 195 members in the 18th legislative period.

# Welcome to the State Parliament The Citizens' Hall

The Citizens' Hall (Bürgerhalle) is the State Parliament's central entrance area. From here, MPs enter the Plenary Chamber and the conference rooms, and staff from the five parliamentary groups and the State Parliament administration enter their workspaces. Groups of visitors receive important initial information on parliamentary work at state level and can direct their questions about the State Parliament to Visitor Service staff here in the Citizens' Hall. Guests then take the glass lift from the Citizens' Hall up to the Plenary Chamber's Visitor Gallery.







## The Work of the Parliamentary Groups

In a democracy, political decisions are not made by one person, but rather by elected representatives of the people. Therefore, parliamentary work is also teamwork, as every decision requires a majority in Parliament.

MPs who belong to the same party or have the same political objectives organise themselves into parliamentary groups in the State Parliament – the first step on the way to a parliamentary majority. The state constitution does not mention parliamentary groups. And yet they play an important role in parliamentary work. They ensure that the political positions of their parties can be implemented in Parliament. They provide MPs with political coordination among themselves and are, therefore, the

link between the parties and Parliament. At least five percent of MPs are required to form a parliamentary group.

#### How do the parliamentary groups work?

The parliamentary groups have a variety of rights to submit motions and influence Parliament. They have seats on the Council of Elders and parliamentary committees in accordance with their strength. Their work takes place under the direction of chairpersons in the parliamentary group meetings, which aim to keep MPs fully informed. MPs discuss technical issues on state policy topics together with their research assistants in parliamentary groups' working groups.

To organise their work, the parliamentary groups elect their leading members at the beginning of the legislative period: chairpersons and their deputies as well as – depending on the size of the parliamentary group – a varying number of committee members. Furthermore, the parliamentary group members elect a Chief Whip. While the parliamentary

group chairpersons are involved in more conceptual roles and represent the parliamentary group externally, the latter take on organisational tasks and can be described as managers of the day-to-day business at the State Parliament. They take care of the parliamentary business for their groups. They try to time the topics that are important for their group for parliamentary proceedings and debates and ensure that all MPs are present, especially for important votes. Together with their parliamentary group leaders, they form an important team for the leadership and cohesion of their respective parliamentary group.

Both the chairpersons of the parliamentary groups and the Chief Whips are members of the Council of Elders, as are Executive Committee members. The council advises the President of the State Parliament on setting the agenda for the plenary sessions. The parliamentary group chairpersons and Chief Whip positions are limited in time because the parliamentary groups usually take stock in new elections of their leading members at the halfway point of the legislative period.

#### Where do the parliamentary groups meet?

The beginning of a session week at the State Parliament is devoted mainly to the work of the parliamentary groups. On Monday mornings, the leading members of the parliamentary groups meet, and Tuesday mornings are reserved for the parliamentary group meeting - a meeting with all group members. There, group representatives from the various parliamentary committees inform their colleagues about the current work progress. This makes it possible for all MPs in the parliamentary group to assess the "political quality" of parliamentary

Alongside the Parliament's plenary assembly, the parliamentary groups are those alliances in which the MPs make political assessments and decisions. Each parliamentary group has its own meeting room at the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia.

#### The parliamentary group leaders at a glance





chairperson: Thorsten Schick



Chief Whip: Matthias Kerkhoff





Group chairperson: Jochen Ott Photo: Mirko Raatz



Chief Whip: Ina Blumenthal





Group chairperson: Verena Schäffer



Chief Whip: Mehrdad Mostofizadeh



Group chairperson: Wibke Brems Photo: Nils Leon Brauer





Freie Demokraten

Group chairperson: Henning Höne



Chief Whip: Marcel Hafke





Group chairperson: Dr Martin Vincentz



Chief Whip: Andreas Keith







#### **List of expert committees**

Committee for Labour, Health and Social Affairs

Committee for Community and Local Affairs

Committee for Equality and Women

Committee for Family, Children and Young People

Main Committee

Committee for Europe and International Affairs

Budget and Finance Committee

Committee for Budgetary Control

Committee for Home Affairs

Science Committee

Transport Committee

Committee for Culture and Media

Petitions Committee

Committee for Legal Affairs

Committee for Schools and Education

Sports Committee

Committee for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Consumer Protection, Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Areas

Committee for Economic Affairs, Industry, Climate Action and Energy Integration Committee

Committee for Building, Housing and Digitalisation

**Election Review Committee** 

# **Expertise and Discussion**

The list of expert committees reads like the directory of the Parliament: All state policy activities from A for "Agriculture" to T for "Transport" are taken into account.

The complexity of the topics forces the MPs to specialise in their fields. Most of the time, they concentrate on two areas of work and become full members of two expert committees. They also take on the role of deputy for their colleagues in other committees.

#### What is the composition of the expert committees?

Expert committees are established at the discretion of the State Parliament. The nature of the topics is usually based on the respective ministries in the State Government. Each expert committee reflects the composition of the entire Parliament on a smaller scale, as the parliamentary groups are represented there in proportion to their share of seats in the plenary assembly.

The chairpersons and their deputies are appointed by the parliamentary groups. The Council of Elders first decides by mutual agreement which committees the individual parliamentary groups should chair. Traditionally, a member of the opposition parliamentary groups chairs the Budget and Finance Committee and a member of the government's parliamentary groups chairs the Main Committee.

In which expert committees MPs participate does not only depend on their personal interests and qualifications, but also on the staffing requirements in their parliamentary groups. MPs who do not belong to a parliamentary group have only limited membership rights in an expert committee. They may make speeches and motions, but they cannot vote. In addition, members of other expert committees are admitted as listeners. If the committee discusses motions or issues submitted by them, they may also participate in the discussions.

#### How do the expert committees work?

Expert committees work to prepare the plenary session. Each bill is referred to the relevant committee after its general presentation in the 1st reading in the plenary session. The MPs in the expert committees then examine it in detail and, if necessary, recommend improvements to its content. The committee presents the result of its discussions in the form of a written report. The plenary assembly usually follows the corresponding recommendation to pass the bill, reject it or approve it in a modified version.

The State Parliament may also refer bills and motions to several expert committees. In this case, one committee takes the lead, while the other committees involved only act in an advisory capacity. They send the results of their discussion to the lead committee, which in turn reports on the decisions to the plenary assembly.

The State Parliament's rules of procedure entitle the expert committees to request all necessary information from the members of the State Government for their further detailed discussions. State Government



ministers or their representatives from the respective ministries are usually invited to the expert committees to report to the MPs on their work.

MPs in the expert committees also have the opportunity, at the request of a quarter of the committee members or a parliamentary group, to obtain the opinion of invited experts and specialists on a bill or motion in public hearings. This allows external knowledge to be considered in detailed parliamentary work. The committees usually meet in public.

#### What does the Petitions Committee do?

The State Parliament's Petitions Committee plays a special role. The right to petition is codified in Article 17 German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*). Specifically, Article 41a North Rhine-Westphalian State Constitution grants everyone the right to defend themselves against injustice, discrimination or unequal treatment by state authorities. All citizens who feel that they have been treated wrongly or unfairly by a North Rhine-Westphalian authority or another public institution of the federal state can contact the Petitions Committee with an informal, written complaint. It is also possible to submit an online petition (www.landtag.nrw.de).

According to the state constitution, members of the Petitions Committee have the right to hear all parties to the proceedings on the matter. They must be allowed to inspect any records and have access to all of the state's facilities. Beyond helping in specific individual cases, the Committee's work is important to identify fundamental difficulties in the implementation of legislative requirements. Therefore, the Petitions Committee is another important source of information for MPs about problems in

the population. The Petitions Committee gives an account of its work to the plenary assembly and the population in bi-annual reports.

#### You can send petitions to:

Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen, Petitionsausschuss, Postfach 10 11 43, 40002 Düsseldorf

Petitions Department Office
Telephone: +49(0)211 884-2143/-2259, Fax: +49(0)211 884-3004
Email: petitionsausschuss@landtag.nrw.de







The 195 MPs meet in the Plenary Chamber (*Plenarsaal*) for approximately 30 to 35 sessions a year. The President of the State Parliament presides over the sessions from an elevated position, alternating with the Vice-Presidents (centre). The State Government benches join on both sides.

These are followed (clockwise) by the benches for the MPs of the SPD, Grüne, CDU, FDP and AfD parliamentary groups. The MPs' main tasks include the election of the Minister President, legislation, the adoption of the state budget and the control of the government.



The President of the State Parliament and his deputies were elected at the inaugural session of the 18th State Parliament on 1 June 2022.



The new Executive Committee (from left): Vice-President Rainer Schmeltzer, President André Kuper, Vice-President Berivan Aymaz and Vice-President Christof Rasche.

## **Electoral Role**

The main tasks of the people's representatives, who are elected for a fixed term, include legislation and controlling the State Government. However, the Parliament elected by the people also has an electoral role of its own. This significantly determines the agenda of the first sessions of a new legislative period.

On 1 June 2022, the 195 MPs elected the CDU politician André Kuper, who has already held this office since 2017, as President of the State Parliament, the highest representative of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia. He represents the State Parliament externally, conducts its business and chairs the plenary sessions. Rainer Schmeltzer (SPD), Berivan Aymaz (Grüne) and Christof Rasche (FDP) are his deputies in official duties.

Other MPs from all five parliamentary groups were elected as secretaries to the Executive Committee of the State Parliament by other MPs. They support the President and his deputies during parliamentary sessions. Their duties include taking requests to speak and recording the results of votes.



## Presidents of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia

1946: Ernst Gnoß (SPD) 1946-1947: Robert Lehr (CDU) 1947-1958: Josef Gockeln (CDU) 1959-1966: Wilhelm Johnen (CDU) 1966: Josef Hermann Dufhues (CDU) 1966-1970: John van Nes Ziegler (SPD) 1970-1980: Wilhelm Lenz (CDU) 1980-1985: John van Nes Ziegler (SPD) 1985-1990: Karl Josef Denzer (SPD) 1990-1995: Ingeborg Friebe (SPD) 1995-2005: Ulrich Schmidt (SPD) 2005-2010: Regina van Dinther (CDU) 2010-2012: Eckhard Uhlenberg (CDU) 2012-2017: Carina Gödecke (SPD) Since 2017: André Kuper (CDU)

Portraits of former State Parliament Presidents who have left Parliament hang in the President's Gallery. Traditionally, they can choose the artist for their portrait themselves.





Hendrik Wüst after his re-election as Minister President of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia on 28 June 2022.



The President of the State Parliament, André Kuper (right), administered the oath of office to Minister President Hendrik Wüst.

In the session on 28 June 2022, the State Parliament re-elected CDU MP Hendrik Wüst as Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia from among its members - he has already been in office since 27 October 2021. He appointed twelve ministers to his government of CDU und Grüne.

Furthermore, the State Parliament elects the members of the Constitutional Court, the members of the State Audit Office, the State Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, and the NRW delegates to the Federal Assembly for electing the Federal President.

#### **How does the State Parliament vote?**

MPs make personnel decisions by secret ballot, using ballot papers and ballot boxes. Conversely they vote openly on issues of substance, meaning decisions on bills, motions and resolutions. This is done as a show of hands or by rising from the seats.

If the result of the vote is unclear, the State Parliament counts the votes according to what is known as the "Hammelsprung-Verfahren" or division procedure. This is a vote "on foot" - MPs enter the Plenary Chamber through the doors marked "yes", "abstention" and "no". The individual voting behaviour of each MP becomes particularly clear in a roll-call vote. This takes place at the request of a parliamentary group or a quarter of the MPs present. When called by name, the person voting answers loudly and clearly with "yes", "no" or "abstention". Each individual vote made by the MPs is recorded in writing in the minutes and can be viewed by the voters.

After Parliament has agreed on processes in Parliament by adopting rules of procedure and has filled the leadership roles, the legislation and control functions come to the fore of parliamentary work.



Twelve ministers are part of the new black-green state government of CDU und Grüne. They were sworn in on 29 June 2022.

#### Minister Presidents of the **State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia**

1946-1947: Rudolf Amelunxen (independent) 1947-1956: Karl Arnold (CDU) 1956-1958: Fritz Steinhoff (SPD)

1958-1966: Franz Meyers (CDU) 1966-1978: Heinz Kühn (SPD) 1978-1998: Johannes Rau (SPD) 2002-2005: Peer Steinbrück (SPD) 2005-2010: Jürgen Rüttgers (CDU) 2010-2017: Hannelore Kraft (SPD) 2017-2021: Armin Laschet (CDU) Since October 2021: Hendrik Wüst (CDU)

1998-2002: Wolfgang Clement (SPD)

## Legislation

Laws are binding rules that affect how people live together and their relationship with the state. The rights and obligations of citizens are clearly defined in legal texts. Since laws are intended to apply to a variety of individual cases, they are formulated in abstract and general terms.

#### Which laws are the responsibility of the State Parliament?

The Basic Law determines the jurisdiction for legislation in Germany. The federal states have the right to pass laws provided that the Basic Law does not give the Federal Government its own legislative powers. Who is responsible for which policy areas is the result of the provisions on *concurrent* and *exclusive* legislation. For example, the State Parliament is responsible for culture, schools, hazard defence, the media, the penal system and local law.

Concurrent legislation: Here, the State Parliament may always enact laws if the Federal Government does not make use of its right, for example, in commercial and labour law or in criminal and traffic law. In this context,



the Federal Government only has the right to make its own legislation in cases where nationwide regulation is required. In certain policy areas, such as university admission, the federal states are permitted to deviate from the corresponding federal laws.

**Exclusive federal legislation:** Here, the State Government can only enact laws if they have been expressly authorised to do so in a federal law. Exclusive legislation includes matters that affect the Federal Republic as a whole and directly, such as foreign and defence policy, monetary matters, postal services and telecommunications.

If the Federal Government exercises its jurisdiction, the federal states participate in the legislation via the *Bundesrat*, the Federal Council. In the event of a "legislative clash", federal law breaks state law.

#### What is the Parliament's budgetary power?

Budgetary power is considered the essential right of the Parliament, as it is one of the Parliament's historical key tasks. The draft budget, which the Minister of Finance introduces to the parliamentary debates, contains all of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia's income and expenses and is broken down into numerous individual plans on specialised areas of state policy. Each year, the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia must decide on the budget for the coming year. For this purpose, a total of three readings are scheduled in the plenary session as well as detailed debates in the State Parliament's expert committees. MPs therefore decide on the state's income and expenses and exercise parliamentary control over the financial situation of North Rhine-Westphalia. The State Government cannot spend any money from the state treasury without their consent.



## **Control of the State Government**

Passing a law is a matter for Parliament – implementing it is then a task for the State Government and its subordinate authorities. In accordance with the principles of the division of powers, legislative power and executive power have been assigned to different bodies. However, the work of the "Parliament workshop" doesn't end with the passing of a law.

The division of state power alone is not enough to prevent abuse of power. For this reason, a state parliament must also have means of control, for example, to be able to check the proper implementation of a law. Parliamentary control is not only a task of the opposition parliamentary groups – it is a task for all groups in the State Parliament.

The State Government has to face MPs' questions in plenary debates and committee meetings. It is always obliged to provide Parliament with information and make statements. Parliament also has other control procedures:

Question time: In the first plenary session of each month, Parliament holds a "question time", during which MPs can put questions to the Government on current issues. The Government has to answer these questions on the spot. Questioners have the opportunity to elaborate on the subject matter by asking up to three additional questions.



Current issue time: At the request of a parliamentary group or a quarter of the MPs, a "current issue time" is held at the beginning of the agenda of a plenary assembly day in Parliament – this is a public debate on a current issue of state policy. According to the rules of procedure, there must be an urgent public interest in the subject being discussed.

Major questions: These can be put to the State Government by a parliamentary group or seven MPs. They serve to provide comprehensive information on a complex area of policy. Therefore, major questions are broad catalogues of questions, each with many sub-questions, which must be answered in writing within three months. If the deadline is not met, the major question becomes an item on the agenda at the session after the next one at the request of the questioners. If a quarter of the MPs or a parliamentary group requests a debate on the State Government's answer, the President of the State Parliament puts the major question on the agenda of the next plenary session. There are often resolution proposals from the Parliament at the end of the public debate.

Minor questions: In contrast to major questions, minor questions can also be submitted by individual MPs. They must be submitted in writing, are answered in writing, but are not debated in the plenary assembly. The minor question must relate to a specific issue – this is often a problematic individual case from the constituency of the MP asking the question. The State Government is given four weeks to reply.

Inquiry committees: These are tasked with resolving grievances in the state. They have special control tools and rights to obtain information to carry out their work. They can summon and swear in witnesses; they have the right to inspect files and have access to all state authorities at any time. Parliament must set up an Inquiry Committee at the request of one-fifth of MPs.

Constructive vote of no confidence: Parliament has only made use of its toughest control tool, the constructive vote of no confidence, twice – in 1956 and 1966. The state constitution stipulates that Parliament can pass a vote of no confidence in the Minister President by electing a successor by a majority of the votes cast.









## Political Arguments Before an Audience

Every year, around 35,000 people take their seats in the Visitors' Gallery at the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia to experience a plenary session and literally watch the MPs from their constituencies at work. Groups of guests on the Gallery have usually registered long in advance; for individual visitors, a short-term reservation is often sufficient.

The citizens' elevated seating position above the Plenary Chamber not only offers a good overview – it is also symbolic in nature. As the electorate, the visitors sit "enthroned" above the MPs. As elected representatives of the people, they are responsible to their voters for a time.

The main purpose of plenary sessions today is to inform the public. MPs and members of the Government have often already spent months in advance dealing with a topic in the committees and parliamentary groups. In the plenary session, the respective political experts from the parliamentary groups present the results of their detailed work to the citizens and present the arguments for their decisions in the plenary assembly.

The rules of procedure, in other words, the rules of parliament, stipulate that speeches are to be given freely. However, written records are permitted. The speeches, including all interposed questions and interjections, can be read in the plenary minutes, which are available to all citizens on the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia's website (www.landtag.nrw.de).

Journalists from daily and weekly newspapers, news agencies, radio stations and online media report on debates and votes and comment on them. The State Parliament has reserved a section of the Visitors' Gallery for them and set up commentator seats for television and radio broad-



casts. Photographers' and television stations' cameras focus on the MPs at the speaker's podium.

Some of the journalists have teamed up in the NRW State Press Conference. It supports the work of those in the media whose work involves state politics - for example, in press conferences in which MPs or members of the state government, among others, make statements on current topics. The State Press Conference has its own rooms in the parliament building.

#### A frequently asked question

Why aren't all MPs present in the plenary assembly for all items on the agenda? Many visitors ask themselves this question when they experience a State Parliament assembly at the Parliament building in Düsseldorf for the first time. The following generally applies: MPs are required to be present during plenary sessions. Attendance lists are laid out on standing desks to the left and right of the entrance to the Plenary Chamber, and MPs must sign them. According to the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia's rules of procedure, all MPs are obliged to notify the President immediately if they are unable to attend State Parliament sessions. Their names are recorded in the session minutes. A permanent presence of all MPs in the Plenary Chamber cannot be guaranteed due to the long duration of the plenary sessions. Plenary sessions begin at 10 am, often do not end until late in the evening and do not make provisions for breaks. MPs duties on plenary assembly days also include holding talks, receiving groups of visitors or participating in meetings of committee representatives.







## **Important Visitors**



On 12 March 2018, the President of the State Parliament, André Kuper, welcomed Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the Reception Room on his inaugural visit.

As a place for encounters, the State Parliament's Re-

ception Room is especially important. It is here that

the President of the State Parliament receives visi-

tors on special occasions and it is here that guests of

honour sign the State Parliament's guest book.



The then Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid came to visit on 13 July 2018.



Heads of state, presidents of parliaments, heads of governments and ambassadors are counted among the guests of honour at the State Parliament. A glance at the guest book shows how varied and abundant the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia's international relations are. Designed with attractive calligraphy, the names of the guests, the date of their visit and the occasion of their visit are entered in the guest book.

Philip from November 2004 can also be found in the book. Her Majesty





High-ranking guests are accompanied to red carpet receptions by police escort.

Raising a flag in the forecourt of the State Parliament.

Queen Silvia of Sweden signed the book during her visit in May 2016. Both the British royal couple and Queen Silvia were impressed by the building's extraordinary architecture during a tour of the State Parliament.

The State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia has friendly ties with many states. Parliamentary groups contribute to this in a special way. MPs have organised themselves within these groups to strengthen contacts with the parliaments, institutions and social groups of friendly states. The Executive Committee decides which parliamentary groups will be set up at the beginning of a legislative term. The State Parliament's Reception Room is not just an important place for guests from Europe and all over the world, but also for many citizens of North Rhine-Westphalia. It is used to receive guests, for honours and also for meetings. In the week before the plenary session, the President of the State Parliament meets with his deputies in the Reception Room. Together they form the Executive Committee to discuss and decide on parliamentary procedures in a collegial and constructive atmosphere.





### **Forum for Diversity The Foyer**

The Foyer (Wandelhalle) surrounds the Plenary Chamber. This is where the MPs exchange views with each other on their way to the plenary assembly. It is here that journalists ask the state politicians to make short statements in front of the television cameras. And also where staff members clarify official matters with MPs between appointments. In short: the Foyer establishes contacts and brings people together - both before plenary sessions and after they end.

### **Art in Parliament**







The sculpture "One up, one down – excentric" by George Rickey

The works of art in the State Parliament are as diverse as the topics dealt with in Parliament and attract many glances from MPs and guests. These works of art are closely related to the extraordinary architecture of the building and are an invitation to onlookers to reflect on the significance of art in politics and society.

Art has always been given high priority in the State Parliament. Even before the completion of the present parliament building, there was an art committee, which was initiated by former State Parliament President John van Nes Ziegler in 1983 and whose work was continued under State Parliament Presidents Karl Josef Denzer and Ingeborg Friebe. The committee members discussed the artistic design of the building as early as during the construction phase of the new parliament building. The goal was clear from the beginning: the art should not complement the building in a decorative way, but rather it should address the architectural character of the building and vary it in a creative way.

The circle as the defining element of the building's architecture can be found in many works of art, for example in Günther Uecker's mural "Interferenzen", which can be admired in the State Parliament Foyer right next to the entrance to the Plenary Chamber.

Architecture and art also share a close bond in the Plenary Chamber. Düsseldorf artist Ferdinand Kriwet (1942-2018) put together the state coat of arms using a total of 3,630 pixels. The aluminium cylinders painted in the state colours on the front wall of the Plenary Chamber also serve as a reminder of the circular shape of the parliament building. At over six metres long and almost two-and-a-half metres high, the work of art fits into the hall with its clear structure without distracting the attention of the MPs and the spectators from the political debates.

#### **Inspiring views**

There is artwork by other well-known artists to be found all over the building - for example, in the State Parliament's restaurant, for which the painter Emil Schumacher designed a wall mosaic. MPs and Parliament staff can take inspiration from the rousing composition during lunch.

And the State Parliament's art can also be enjoyed while taking a walk along the Rhine promenade. "One up, one down – excentric" by US artist George Rickey (1907-2002), the kinetic sculpture located directly next to the parliament building, makes the connection between chaos and order visible. The sculpture's steel rods move depending on the strength and direction of the wind, making passers-by eyewitnesses to a fascinating balancing act.

A few metres further on, Heinz Mack's fountain sculpture creates a literally flowing transition from the parliament building to the adjacent







"Raum der Stille" ("Room of Silence") by Prof. Gotthard Graubner

Rhine. Mack has created an apparently almost weightless installation of water, light, glass and stainless steel in front of the windows of the Parliament's library. The materials used once again emphasise the transparency of parliamentary work and the openness of Parliament.

#### **Exhibitions in the Foyer**

Its central location within the parliament building and its large-scale layout make the State Parliament's Foyer an ideal venue for exhibitions and other kinds of events. The generously sized window areas put art and exhibition works in the right light. Special exhibitions on socially relevant topics are regularly held there - a welcome occasion for citizens to present their often voluntary work in clubs and associations and to draw the attention of MPs to current issues in their areas.

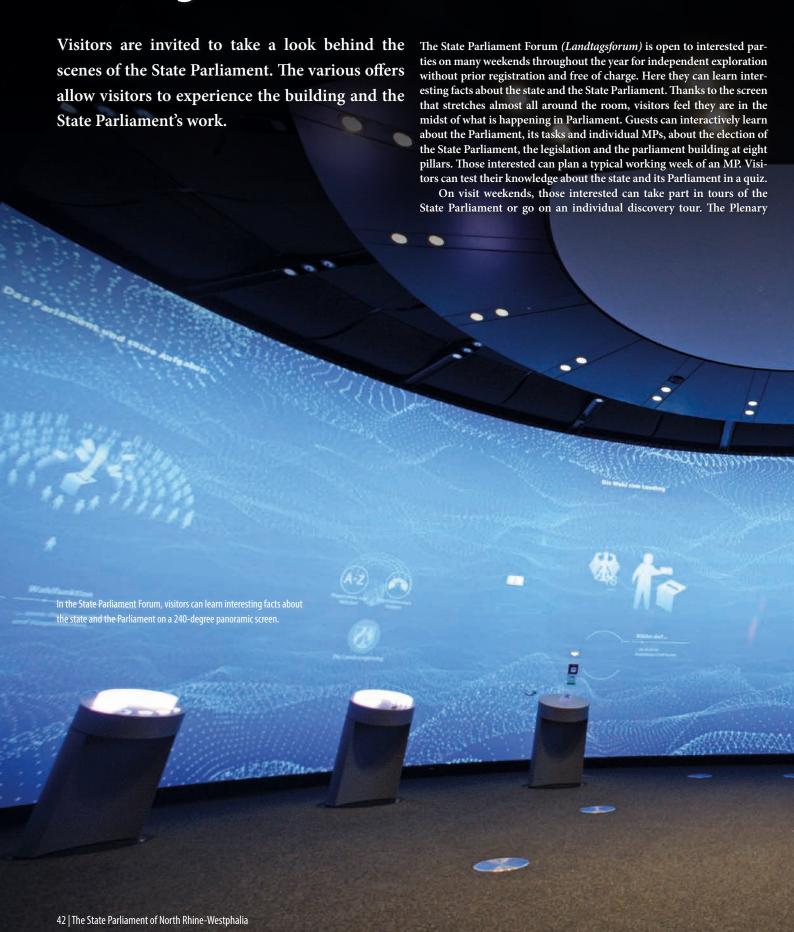
#### The Room of Silence

The State Parliament created a very unusual place called "Raum der Stille" ("Room of Silence"), which opened in December 2011. There, people of all faiths can find a moment of peace and contemplation in the hectic everyday life of parliament. The room in the Citizens' Hall is also the venue for State Parliament prayer services, to which the Catholic and Protestant churches jointly invite people on Thursdays during plenary session weeks. The room was designed by the internationally renowned Düsseldorf artist Prof. Gotthard Graubner (1930-2013). His work is defined by colour and light - as can be seen in the bright "Room of Silence".



The "Landtagsbrunnen" ("State Parliament Fountain") by Heinz Mack in front of the Parliament library's windows Photo: picture alliance/imageBROKER

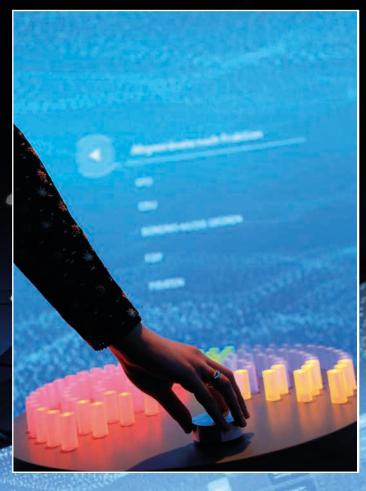
### Visiting the State Parliament



Chamber, some committee and parliamentary group rooms and the press conference room are open.

During the week, the State Parliament also offers visit programmes for registered groups during the committee and plenary assembly weeks. After an introduction to parliamentary work, the Visitor Service explains the background, answers questions and accompanies the groups of visitors to the Plenary Chamber Gallery.

A smartphone also makes an independent discovery tour of the State Parliament building possible on visit weekends. The "Democracy Tour" starts in the Citizens' Hall and takes visitors from station to station. Information on the location can be requested using NFC technology or a QR code at each of the nine stations.



### **Planning your visit**

The next visit weekend dates and further information: lt.nrw/Visit

www.landtag.nrw.de

Visitor group registration:

Visitor Service

Tel. +49(0)211 884-2955

Email: besucherdienst@landtag.nrw.de

AUDIOGUIDE

Audioguide Landtagsforum →

#### Landtagsforum

Acht Infostelen, interaktive Formate und eine Panoramaleinwand stehen bereit, um Ihre Eindrücke abzurunden oder zu vertiefen. Was tun Abgeordnete eigentlich die ganze Woche über? Planen Sie eine exemplarische Arbeitswoche an einer der Stelen. Oder testen Sie an einer anderen Ihr Wissen über Land und Landtag in einem Quiz.

336

## **Living History**







MPs met at the Henkel Factories from 1946 to 1949.

In the "Parliamentary History Building" (Haus der Parlamentsgeschichte), guests embark on a journey through more than 75 years of North Rhine-Westphalia's parliamentary history – from the birth of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1946 to the present day.

Not far from the State Parliament, at Villa Horion, visitors can directly experience North Rhine-Westphalia's parliamentary history. Original radio and television broadcasts combined with original furniture and exhibits make the history of the State Parliament's individual locations come alive again in various rooms. This begins in 1946 at the Opera House with the State Parliament's inaugural session. From 1946 until 1949, the State Parliament was located at the Henkel Factories. The *Kaffeeklappe*, a legendary non-formal meeting place for MPs at the *Ständehaus*, which was the State Parliament's location for almost 40 years, has also been recreated. In the last room, guests take a seat on chairs used by MPs in the State Parliament on the Rhine.

## Tours in the Parliamentary History Building

The "Parliamentary History Building" (Haus der Parlamentsgeschichte) at Johannes-Rau-Platz in Düsseldorf can be visited as part of a tour. The offer is aimed at groups of up to 15 people. The free tours are offered Monday to Friday by appointment. Guided tours for individuals take place on Thursdays at 5 pm.

Registration and information at:
Foundation House of History North Rhine-Westphalia
Visitor Service
Tel. +49(0)211 513613-33
Email: besucherservice@hdgnrw.de

The exhibition provides insights into the work of MPs and introduces the people who have shaped the parliamentary history of North Rhine-Westphalia. It shows how rapidly the framework conditions for politicians have changed since the provisional years of development. The tours end in the former cabinet room of the State Government. Villa Horion was the official residence of the Minister Presidents from 1961 to 1999.





The Ständehaus was the location of the State Parliament from 1949 until 1988.

The State Parliament on the Rhine was opened in 1988.

# Paths of Parliamentary Democracy

Those interested can also retrace the steps of North Rhine-Westphalian parliamentary history along the banks of the Rhine in Düsseldorf and in the old town. The "Paths of Parliamentary Democracy" is a tour past five stations that commemorate the places where the State Parliament met. Stela at each station provide visitors with information on the historical significance of the places. The path also leads to Villa Horion. The former State Chancellery office has been used by the State Parliament since 2001. A stele in front of the Henkel Hall in the old town commemorates the time spent at the Henkel Factories, located in the Holthausen district of Düsseldorf.

Wege der parlamentarischen Demokratie

Landtag am Rhein

Colonia war di Cari dina dei ministrativo conqui di data 
Lana serrativo di mantanti della dali 192 dei 193 de





### **Children and Young People Welcome!**

The State Parliament offers many things on its programme to familiarise children and young people with democracy. They can get to know the State Parliament, understand parliamentary processes and even try them out for themselves as part of simulation games, visits to the Parliament or at their school – getting a head start.

Visit programmes: As early as primary school, children come to understand that votes are based on majorities. The programme provides suitable and vivid explanations of what MPs do for this age group. Sitting on the chairs in the Plenary Chamber, voting, recreating parliamentary goings on – this is political education. And on top, a different kind of school trip. The offer is aimed at year fours.

Secondary school pupils delve a little deeper. On a class visit to the State Parliament, they learn essential information about the work of MPs. Afterwards, they take part in a simulation game of parliamentary democracy. A programme for school years 7 to 12.

Digital discovery tours: Children and young people can also visit the State Parliament virtually. The class is then guided through the State Parliament from afar by the Visitor Service, sees rooms central to parliamentary happenings and an explanatory film about the work of the State Parliament. The whole thing also works on plenary session days – during the virtual plenary visit, the Visitor Service explains the current agenda of the plenary assembly following the introductory film: what is being discussed? The class can then follow the MPs speeches and arguments live via video stream.

Action days: The "School at the State Parliament" action day, which takes place several times a year, is aimed at year 9 pupils. They experience democracy live at the State Parliament and gain insights into its work. Afterwards, they can discuss current issues with the State Parliament President or another member of the Executive Committee.

Youth State Parliament: 195 young people – as many as regular MPs – slip into their roles on the annual Youth State Parliament Day. They debate real issues in the plenary session and various committees – and even





vote at the end. Elections also take place: for the Youth State Parliament Executive Committee and the parliamentary group leaders. The simulation game usually lasts three days and is aimed at 16- to 20-year-olds. Those interested can apply directly to the MPs.

The Executive Committee goes to school: If pupils cannot come to the State Parliament - no problem: the State Parliament also comes to schools. The programme is called Präsidium macht Schule (The Executive Committee goes to school) and gives pupils the opportunity to ask any questions they might have. What does politics have to do with me? What does the State Parliament actually do? The President of the State Parliament or one of his deputies will be on hand to answer questions. Beforehand, there will be a film about the State Parliament. The offer is aimed at all types of schools.







Touring exhibitions: The State Parliament's touring exhibitions, for all types of schools, actually takes the Parliament into schools, figuratively speaking. The Plenary Chamber takes centre stage - the heart of democracy in North Rhine-Westphalia. Pupils can make speeches themselves at a speaker's podium and hold debates with their fellow pupils on current political issues. An interactive game is included. The exhibitions are tailored to the respective school type and target group. They can be requested free of charge from the State Parliament. If desired, the President of the State Parliament or another Executive Committee member will open the exhibition at the school.

World Children's Day: Children and families are warmly welcomed on World Children's Day in September. A varied hands-on programme and age-appropriate information for the youngest visitors takes priority. The State Parliament is not usually this colourful - and sometimes there is even a smell of popcorn.

Internships: The State Parliament is also an interesting place to work. This is why the State Parliament administration offers internships mandatory during school, training and studies.

#### Contact

The State Parliament Visitor Service Tel. +49(0)211 884-2955 Email: besucherdienst@landtag.nrw.de It.nrw/Visit

School Programme Unit, Youth Parliament Tel. +49(0)211 884-2434 Email: jugend@landtag.nrw.de www.jugend.landtag.nrw.de





