

# Germany's rearmament programme: Christian Democrats and Social Democrats declare war on the working class

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17 March 2025

Germany's federal parliament, the Bundestag, is voting today on the largest rearmament programme since the Nazi regime. It will provide the future government with around €1 trillion to rearm Germany into a major military power and enable it to wage war. The sum is twice as high as the annual federal budget. As the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens are in agreement, a two-thirds majority in favour of the necessary constitutional amendment is as good as certain—despite a few dissenters in their own ranks. The Bundesrat, the second chamber of Germany's parliament, must then give its approval on Friday.

The rearmament programme consists of two parts.

For military spending—and at the insistence of the Greens also for the intelligence agencies, civil defence, cybersecurity and support for Ukraine—the principle formulated by Chancellor-designate Friedrich Merz (CDU) applies: “Whatever it takes.” The government is authorised to take out unlimited loans for this purpose. All expenditure that exceeds 1 percent of annual economic output (approx. €43 billion) is exempt from the debt brake, a rule that prevents German governments from borrowing money. Loans totalling €500 billion are under discussion.

An additional special fund totalling €500 billion with a term of 12 years will be set up for investments in infrastructure. Here too, borrowing is not subject to the debt brake.

In order to divert attention from the reactionary nature of the rearmament programme, the SPD, the trade unions, the Left Party and the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) are presenting the special fund for

infrastructure as a positive achievement.

SPD leader Lars Klingbeil called it “a powerful boost for Germany with the potential to move our country forward for years, perhaps decades to come.” IG Metall chairwoman Christiane Benner praised the fact that politicians had “understood that action must now be taken quickly and resolutely.” Left Party leader Jan van Aken commented that his party was of course in favour of investment in infrastructure, but against the “incredibly high level of rearmament.”

In fact, the €500 billion from the special infrastructure fund, as well as the unlimited loans for the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr), are being used to prepare for war. Leading business representatives are open about this.

Not only weapons systems for the Bundeswehr are needed to provide Germany with effective military security, said Susanne Wiegand, chair of the Security Committee of the Federation of German Industries (BDI) and former head of the defence company Renk. Infrastructure is also “part of overall economic resilience.” Railway lines, bridges and roads need to be upgraded to ensure that larger units can be deployed quickly in an emergency.

A “leading representative of the German armaments industry” was quoted by *Wirtschaftswoche* as saying that the construction of bunkers, the optimisation of medical care and the purchase of trucks for heavy-duty transportation that can carry Leopard tanks weighing several tonnes—“everything that private companies cannot do—is also important.

Two years ago, the Territorial Command of the German Armed Forces already developed the “Operations Plan Germany” (OPLAN DEU),

comprising more than 1000 pages, which defines the close cooperation between the military and civilian authorities in the event of war. This plan is now being put into practice with the special infrastructure fund.

However, the rearmament programme is not only directed against Russia and other war aims of German imperialism, it is also a declaration of war on the working class. Even though it is financed by loans, the costs will fall on the working class—in the form of wage cuts, social cuts, the reintroduction of compulsory military service, the militarisation of the whole of society and the suppression of democratic rights.

Chancellor-designate Merz and other leading politicians have repeatedly emphasised that, despite the easing of the debt brake, there must be no letup in austerity measures in social spending.

The Greens have even insisted that the word “additional” be written into the text of the law as a prerequisite for their support for it. This means that the money available from the special fund may only be spent on additional investments and not on investments that were already planned. This is intended to prevent funds released from being used for better pensions or pay rises in the public sector. “We have pushed through additional investments in infrastructure and climate protection and prevented expensive election gifts,” commented Green Party finance policy expert Sven-Christian Kindler on the agreement.

The President of the Ifo Institute, Clemens Fuest, also insists on structural reforms and spending cuts. “We have to deal with the fact that we are losing prosperity,” he said. “Nothing can prevent us from tightening our belts or improving performance.”

The additional costs to the federal budget alone resulting from the billions in loans are enormous. After the national debt has been reduced from 82 to 63 percent of GDP since 2010 as a result of aggressive austerity programmes, it will now rise to 90 percent over the next 10 years, according to a forecast by economist Lars Feld. This would result in additional interest expenditure of 250 to 400 billion euros, which would have to be saved elsewhere.

While the SPD is celebrating the easing of the debt brake as a victory over the CDU/CSU, which had strictly rejected this in the election campaign, it will now make even greater concessions to the social hardliners in the CDU in the coalition negotiations.

The focus here is on the citizen’s benefit, on which 5.4 million people are dependent. Merz already threatened massive cuts during the election campaign. After the exploratory talks with the SPD, he announced: “We will reorganise the existing citizen’s benefit system into a basic jobseeker benefit. People who are able to work and repeatedly refuse reasonable work will have their benefits completely withdrawn.”

What the CDU/CSU and SPD categorically rule out are higher burdens for the rich, whose wealth has increased enormously in recent years. According to Oxfam, the wealth of billionaires alone grew by 2 trillion US dollars worldwide in 2024. In Germany, 13 new billionaires were added, bringing the total number to 130. Their wealth grew by 26.8 billion dollars during the year.

Anyone who owned shares or property earned massive additional income without lifting a finger. The German share index has quintupled in twenty years from 4,300 to 23,000 points. The total value (market capitalisation) of the 40 DAX companies now amounts to almost €2 trillion. Property prices have also exploded. Total German property assets together with land values totalled €19.4 trillion in 2022, almost five times as much as gross domestic product.

The dominance of billionaire oligarchs is not compatible with social equality, democracy and peace. The battle for markets, raw materials and profit is driving capitalism back to war and dictatorship worldwide. Trump, a fascist who has gathered some of the world’s richest oligarchs around him, now sits in the White House. Germany is following the same path.



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