

Local Council Elections on June 07, 2009

Elections will be held on June 07, 2009, to elect the new Local Councils (Gemeinderäte) and County Councils (Kreistage).

For the third time, citizens from the countries of the European Union will also be entitled to vote as well as being eligible to stand for office. It has taken quite some time to achieve this right to vote in local elections for all EU citizens: The principles were established in 1992 in the Treaty of Maastricht, whilst the Federal Parliament and the Regional Parliament implemented these in national law: Since that moment, you the citizens of our community now have the same rights and obligations as your German neighbours.

What are the towns and municipalities responsible for?

The towns and municipalities are responsible for **all local affairs**. They construct streets and schools, set up cemeteries and parks, plan the development of the town and look after those residents who are not that well off. In addition, the towns and municipalities take over various tasks on behalf of the State: They issue German passports and identity documents; they monitor security and public order and are responsible for holding elections. In the larger towns and cities, the local administration also issues building permits, licences for restaurants and residence permits for foreign citizens.

The Local Council **represents the citizens**. It consists of the Mayor and a number of elected Council Members. The number of Council Members that are elected depends on the size of the town.

Who elects the Local Council?

All citizens of the town, who are entitled to vote, elect the Local Council.

The people who are entitled to vote,

- are nationals of one of the Member States of the European Union,
- are at least 18 years of age on the day of the elections, and
- have lived in the town for at least three months.

The amount of time that an EU national has lived in Germany is immaterial. People who can vote include, for example, an Italian who has lived in Germany since 1956, just as much as somebody from Sweden, who only came to Germany just three months before the elections.

What does the Local Council decide?

The Local Council decides on all the important affairs that concern the town, for example

- about building plans, that determine where and how construction work may take place in the town,
- about the construction of public facilities (e.g. an indoor swimming pool, a school, a library or a nursery),
- about the establishment of sports fields and play areas,
- about the purchase and sale of land belonging to the town,
- about the level of the rates, local business rates, the dog licence fees and other charges,
- on the use of taxation and other income of the town as part of the annual budget.

In addition, the Local Council elects the executive officers and employees of the local administration.

How is the Local Council elected?

Who proposes the candidates for the Local Council?

In most towns and municipalities in Baden-Württemberg, **political parties and electoral associations** propose the candidates for the Local Council. Every electoral association and every party can normally propose as many candidates as there are seats for members of the Local Council. The candidates are nominated during a meeting of the political party or the electoral association.

All the candidates of the same political party or the same electoral association are listed in columns on the ballot paper. The political party or electoral association determines the sequence in which the candidates are listed.

How many votes does each elector have?

Each elector has an equivalent number of votes to the number of local councillors that are to be elected in the particular town or municipality.

With his/her votes, the elector can elect any of the candidates **from the different lists**. He or she can give each candidate, **one, two or three votes**. All told, he or she may only cast an equivalent number of votes to the number of local councillors that are to be elected in the town.

Everything else that you need to take into account when voting is listed in a leaflet that you will receive well in advance of the elections from your town together with your ballot papers.

Where and how does the election take place?

On Sunday, June 07, 2009, **Polling Stations** will be set up in your town or municipality, in which you can cast your vote. Each voter is assigned to just one Polling Station.

Without having to do anything, several weeks before the elections, you will receive a post card (official poll notification), on which the administration will inform you that you are entitled to vote and at which Polling Station you may do so.

Note!

If you have not received an official poll notification **at the latest by May 17, 2009**, you should contact your Town Hall, to enquire why you have not been notified.

In order to carefully prepare for the poll, about one week before the elections your town or municipality will send you **your ballot paper and a leaflet** with information about how to cast your vote.

On the day of the elections, your Polling Station will be open **from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.** In the Polling Station, you will be given an envelope in which you can place your ballot paper. If by mistake you have spoiled the ballot paper, or are unable to find it, you will be given a new ballot paper at the Polling Station, which you can fill in at the Polling Station.

What should I do, if I will be away from home on polling day or if I am unable to go to the Polling Station?

In this case, you also can participate in form of a **Postal Vote**. Your local authority (Town Hall) will send you the documents for postal voting. You can collect these in person from the Town Hall, or you can request them in writing together with the official poll notification card. The final date for applying for a postal vote is Friday, June 05, 2009. Your Postal Vote Letter with your ballot paper must be received at the specified address no later than Sunday, June 07, 2009, 6 p.m.

You can obtain further information from your local authority.

Kommunalwahlen in Baden-Württemberg am 7. Juni 2009

Informationen auf Englisch für EU-Bürgerinnen und EU-Bürger (Teil 3)

The County Council Elections on June 07, 2009

What is a Local Government Area (Landkreis)?

Some tasks are simply too difficult to handle for a town and exceeds its capability. For this reason, most towns belong to a Local Government Authority, which handles these tasks for them.

The Local Government Authority is primarily responsible for the following affairs:

- refuse disposal,
- building and operating vocational training schools and special schools,
- social welfare and youth welfare services,
- building and operating district hospitals and
- building and maintaining secondary roads.

What is the County Council (Kreistag)?

The **County Council** represents the citizens. The number of members depends on the size of the county. Currently, the smallest County Council in Baden-Württemberg has 40 members; the largest County Council has 108 members.

Who does elect the County Council?

Those who are eligible to vote,

- are nationals of one of the Member States of the European Union,
- are at least 18 years old on the day of the elections, and
- have lived in the county for at least three months.

For the elections, the county is divided into constituencies. Each elector elects just one council member for his or her constituency.

What does the County Council determine?

The County Council determines everything that is of importance for the county.

The County Council (Kreistag)

- elects the Landrat, who is both, the head of administration and the chairman of the County Council (every 8 years),
- prepares the budget for the county and determines how the money received is spent,
- decides on the building and operation of vocational training schools and the district hospitals,
- selects the medical superintendents for the district hospitals,
- decides on the principles for refuse disposal, the level of the charges for refuse collection and on the type of disposal (landfill sites, refuse incineration) and
- decides on the construction of secondary roads and on promoting public transport (buses and trains).

How is the County Council elected?

The County Council Election takes place together with the Local Council Election - in the same Polling Station and at the same time. The Official Poll Notification for the Local Council Election is also valid for the County Council Election.

For the County Council Election, the administration will also send you your Ballot Paper around one week prior to Polling Day. Once again, you can calmly prepare at home on how you intend to vote.

The county is divided into constituencies. Every major town or several smaller municipalities form one constituency. The political parties and electoral associations issue the lists with the candidates separately for each constituency.

Each elector has as many votes as there are County Councillors to be elected in the constituency. The elector can use his or her votes to select candidates from all lists, and can award each candidate one, two or three votes. All together, the elector may only cast an equivalent number of votes to the number of County Councillors that are to be elected in his or her constituency.