



SOCIETY

# What do German election volunteers do?

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**On September 24, hundreds of thousands of volunteers will be handing out ballots, checking voters' names against lists, and counting votes once the polling station closes. The entire process is open to the public.**



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On September 24, German election volunteers will **head to the polling stations** in schools and public buildings nationwide long before opening time at 8:00 a.m. and they will be the last to leave the stations long after the election ends at 6 p.m.

### How are election volunteers chosen?

Anyone eligible to vote in Germany, i.e. 18 years or older, and holding a German passport, can be an election volunteer.

Either they have been recruited by the municipality — they can only turn that summons down if they have a convincing reason — , or they offer their services to the state election supervisor or their local electoral office. A few days ahead of the vote, volunteers undergo training to make sure

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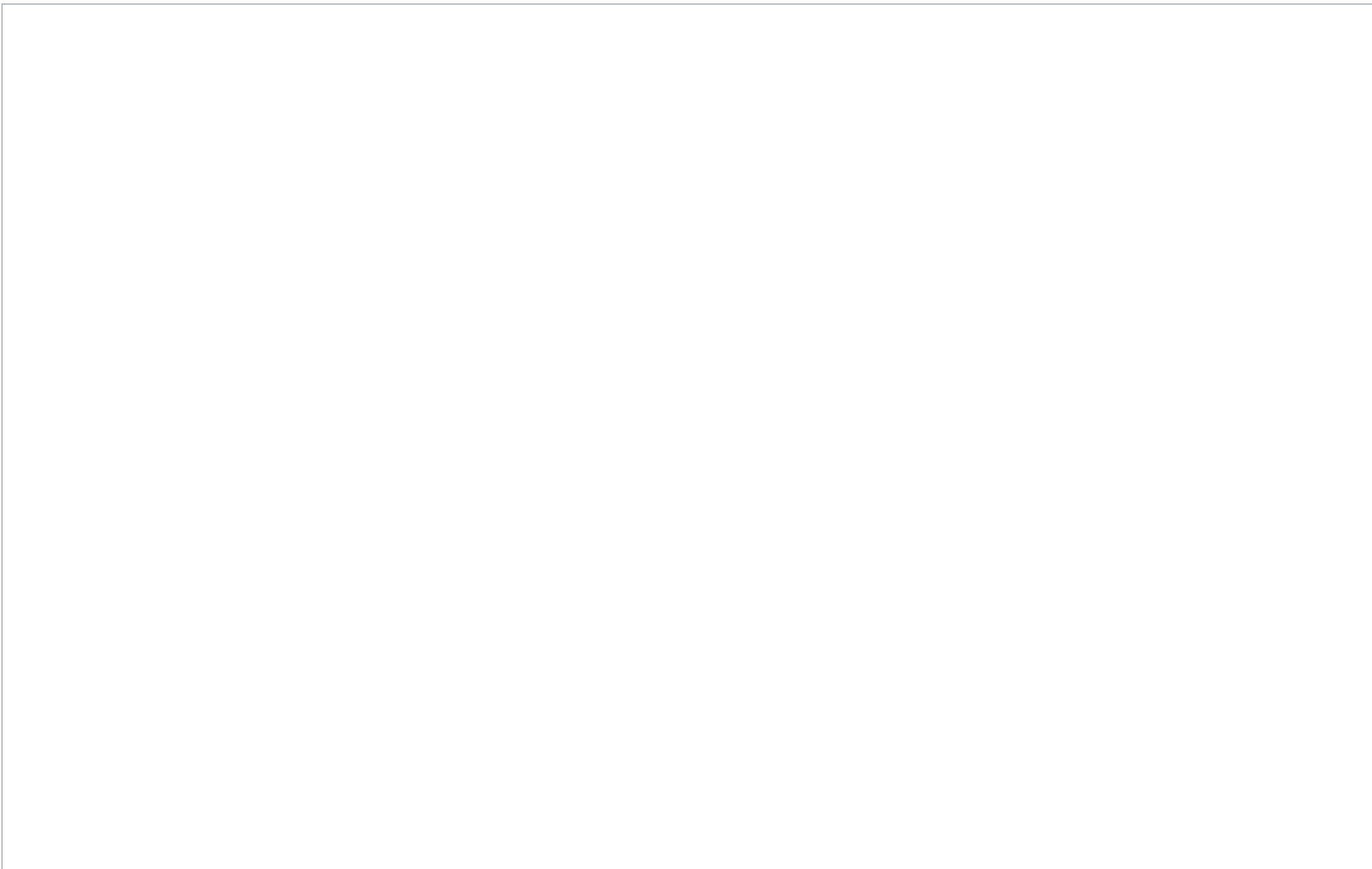


German federal election 2017, posted at 66,000 polling stations across the country, usually classrooms in schools or in public buildings.



The ballot contains two votes: one for a candidate and one for a party

Image: Fotolia/MaxWo



Of these, about 73,500 polling stations are regular stations with ballot boxes open to the public. 14,500 are reserved for counting the **absentee votes**. Five to nine volunteers help out in each polling station: an electoral officer, a deputy electoral officer and three to seven regular committee members. They all receive payment of between up to 35 euros (\$42) for expenses — sometimes more depending on the respective electoral office.

**What do election volunteers do during polling?**



Before the polling station opens, the team of volunteers ensures that everything is the right place and that the ballot box is in fact empty.

Volunteers check the voter's ID and cross reference the official register and then hand voters their ballot and an envelope, with which the voter enters a screened-in desk set

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**what happens after polling stations close:**

Once the polling stations close at 6 p.m. the volunteers open the ballot box, take out the envelopes and remove the ballot slips. They sort the ballots according to a pre-arranged system, decide on whether the votes are valid or invalid, and count the votes - reading out each vote aloud, which is noted in writing in a log.

At the end, the number of ballots is compared with the number of people who voted in that particular polling station.

Every citizen is allowed to watch and monitor the entire counting process; and in effect, the volunteers monitor each other. The result of the vote is then passed on from the polling station to the local election authorities, via phone or via messenger. From there, they are passed on to the next level, and end up on the desk of the federal electoral committee. More elaborate minutes of the evening are noted and passed on separately along with the actual paper ballot slips to the municipality.

**DW has extensive coverage of the general election 2017**



Several volunteers watch the ballot box being emptied at 6 p.m. *Image: picture-alliance/dpa/M. Tirl*

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