



Edition 205 – June 2022

Good News: More Money 2022/23

Unexpected additional tax revenues make it possible for the Berlin coalition fractions to spend 550 million euros more in the budget negotiations than the Senate had originally planned. 300 projects were therefore considered to receive money or increased funding. These include more money for street trees and swimming halls, planning costs for the expansion of the subway network, a central immigration centre, the construction of schools (see article below), the cleaning of further parks by the BSR and the more electrification of the vehicle fleet of the police and fire brigade.

Prayer: Thank God for these unexpected grants to improve the quality of life in our city

The New Senate: Daniel Wesener (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), Senator for Finance

In a series over the next few months, we will introduce all members of the new Senate and pray for them.

Daniel Wesener was born in Hamburg in 1975 and studied history and art history (without a degree). He has been active in politics for the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen party since 2003. From 2006 he was a BVV member in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, from 2011 state chairman of his party and from 2016 a member of the House of Representatives. He has been Senator for Finance in Berlin since December 21, 2021. He lives in a civil partnership with the Green politician Dirk Behrendt. In addition to drawing up and enforcing the double budget (2022+2023) for Berlin, which is due to be passed in June, he is also responsible for fighting for the federal government to contribute to the costs of the energy flat rate, the costs of supplying and housing Ukraine refugees and the talks and planning about the cost of re-municipalizing district heating in the city. In order to finance the needs of the city, new debts have to be taken on again.

Prayer:

- **Pray for wisdom, strength and good choices for tasks**
- **Pray that well-being of Berliners is high priority when planning expenses**
- **Pray that the Senator strikes a good balance between necessary spending, new borrowing and debt repayment**

The New Senate: Iris Spranger (SPD), Senator for the Interior, Digitization and Sports

Iris Spranger was born in Halle (Saale) in 1961. She is married and has a son. From 1986 to 1991 she studied law at the Humboldt University in Berlin. From 1994 to 2006 she was a freelance lecturer in tax law and commercial software at the Chamber of Crafts in Potsdam. From 2006 to 2011 she was State Secretary for Finance in the Senate Department. In 1994 she joined the SPD. She's been in the press a lot lately. In May, her citizens' office was smeared with the demand "No Police Station at Kotti" and damaged. The planned police station is intended to combat the growing crime rate at Kottbusser Tor, but is mostly rejected by local residents. The high costs of over € 3 million have also come under criticism. The Senator is very active against right-wing extremism and anti-Semitic demonstrations.

Prayer:

- **Pray for good, professionally competent advisors in this large department**
- **Pray for protection from physical attacks and defamation for the Senator and her family**
- **Pray for success in advancing the digitization of government agencies**
- **Pray for grace to implement the fight against crime, anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism**

Ukraine Refugees in the Job Center

The Job Centers (employment exchange) in Berlin are preparing to look after around 60,000 Ukrainian refugees beginning in June. According to federal plans, social benefits are to be paid out via the Job Centers from June 1st. Refugees from Ukraine should then be able to receive basic security – like Hartz IV recipients. A special hotline for information in Ukrainian and Russian will be set up. A possible overload of the Berlin Job Centers is not to be feared according to the spokesman. The Bundestag and Bundesrat still have to pass the corresponding draft law.

Prayer:

- **Pray that the employment offices will be able to cope well with the expected rush**
- **Pray that anger at paying taxpayers' money to people who "didn't do anything" for it would give way to a compassionate attitude**

Less Money for Education?

At first it seemed that the funds for education provided for in the coalition agreement would not be included in the budget. The plan sparked some protests from education policy spokespersons from various parties, but also from the broad alliance "Schools must be different" which consists of teachers, trade unions, parents and the citizens' platforms. In the renegotiations on the 2022/23 budget, the funds were then approved: the cancelled available fund was even increased to 7.8 million. That is money with which schools can work unbureaucratically. There is an additional 17 million for the training of teachers, even 200 million for building schools and 15 million for expanding day-care centres.

Prayer:

- **Thank God the successful intervention of various groups**
- **Pray for fast implementation, especially with regard to increasing the capacities in the training of teachers**
- **Pray for Education Senator Astrid-Sabine Busse, who is accused of lacking assertiveness in the budget negotiations**

Cyber Security in Berlin Administration Agencies

The Russian war of aggression in Ukraine has long since spread to the digital space – it recently reached Berlin. The state portal "Berlin.de" and all related citizen services were not available for two hours on a Saturday. All indications point to pro-Russian hackers as the cause. For example, appointments for the citizen registration offices could not be booked. The case draws attention to the IT security of the Berlin administration, which hackers likely considered to be a comparatively easy target. According to the latest IT security report, the average degree of implementation of the information security regulations applicable in the country is 60 percent. The situation is particularly bad in district offices and subordinate authorities. A centralization of IT security seems urgently needed. The implementation of security concepts by the authorities has not been able to be checked so far; instead, compliance must be trusted.

Prayer:

- **Pray for the implementation of the urgently required centralization and control of the IT security of the Berlin administration authorities**
- **Pray for protection against cyber-attacks, especially on "critical infrastructure"**

Lack of Rain

Completely dry in March, some rain at the beginning of April, a few more rains in May – that is by no means enough in the whole of north-eastern Germany and therefore also in Berlin. The soil has dried out in depth due to the lack of precipitation in the years 2018 to 2020. Our flora, especially the forest and street trees, are not used to such drought and react with a time lag with damage. Young street trees are particularly at risk. The district offices try to water here and there, but also ask the residents to help water the trees.

Prayer:

- **Pray for more and prolonged rain**
- **Pray for local and global combating of climate change and its causes**
- **Pray for appropriate measures in Berlin, such as planting resistant trees**

Keeping On: BER-Finances

EasyJet handles most flights at BER airport. The carrier has now decided to withdraw eight of 18 machines permanently beginning in the fall, because their operation is not worth it. Accordingly, the staff will be reduced. This puts the finances of BER under additional pressure. They are scarce anyway and in the long term depend on massive grants from the federal government and the states of Berlin and Brandenburg as shareholders.

Let us continue to pray for an increase in passenger numbers and a relaxation of the airport's financial situation.

Dates

8.6.: Prayer for City Politics, 6-7 pm, Rotes Rathaus, in front of the main entrance

July 2, beginning 3pm: Celebration of 20 Years of Together for Berlin in Treptow, starting at the Neuapostolische Kirche, Schmollerplatz 3, 12435 Berlin

Prayer for Berlin
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