

Improving the functionality of the healthcare system

Major challenges ahead

There is broad consensus among the government and opposition parties that Germany's healthcare system requires further comprehensive reform to ensure that high-quality care can be provided at sustainable cost in the long term.

In a speech before the Bundestag in mid-May, German Federal Health Minister Nina Warken (a member of the centre-right CDU party) outlined her plans for the coming years. Referring to the financial pressures facing both statutory health insurance and long-term care insurance, she signalled a willingness to act swiftly. Opposition parties also recognise the urgent need for action in many areas of healthcare policy.

A modern and highly efficient healthcare system

In her first address to the Bundestag as Minister of Health, Warken said that the new coalition government of CDU and the centre-left SPD aims to restore public confidence in the functionality of the healthcare system. She stressed the need to prevent systemic shortcomings such as long travel distances to hospitals or pharmacies, which are both inconvenient for patients and costly for the health service. The heart of her programme, she proclaimed, is her goal of ensuring high-quality, needs-based and affordable healthcare. Warken acknowledged that the challenges facing the health and care sectors are immense. She cited inefficient structures, insufficient sustainable financing and excessive bureaucracy as examples.

"We'll do everything we can to improve the healthcare system," she said. Insured

persons are entitled to a modern and highly efficient healthcare system. Warken also wants reforms to take the needs of healthcare professionals into account, with the aim of making their work more efficient and improving patient care. Strengthening individual responsibility among staff is another priority, especially in the nursing sector. "We can't afford to leave the potential of skilled nursing staff untapped", she stated.

Reform proposals in the pipeline

Warken confirmed that reforms introduced by her predecessor, Prof. Karl Lauterbach (SPD), particularly in hospital policy, would be continued and further developed. Digitalisation efforts in healthcare will also move forward, as would reform of emergency care. Another aim is to improve the way patients are guided through outpatient services. A government-appointed commission is expected to present proposals for stabilising statutory health insurance contributions in the long term. Referring indirectly to acute funding shortages in the federal backup health fund, Warken emphasised that short-term action would also be necessary, including with regard to long-term care insurance.

"The tight financial situation requires a multi-pronged approach," she said. She intends to present proposals to provide financial breathing room for the long-term care system beyond the end of the

year. Medium- and long-term solutions will also be required. A joint federal and state working group is expected to present proposals for a comprehensive long-term care reform later this year. One key aim is to address the sharp rise in co-payments by care recipients.

Source: German Bundestag, 15 May 2025



Nina Warken is new German Federal Health Minister. Predecessor was Prof. Karl Lauterbach.

