

Answer**of the Federal Government****to the Written Question from the MPs Gökyak Akbulut, Desiree Becker, Janina Böttger, other MPs and Die Linke parliamentary group
– Parliamentary Document 21/5890 –****Legal infringement, corruption and security risks in connection with EXPO 2027 Belgrade and consequences for German participation**

In 2023, the Republic of Serbia was chosen as the official host country for the international specialised exhibition EXPO 2027 by the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE). Since then, serious concerns have been raised in the Serbian public and among civil society organisations regarding the rule of law, transparency and integrity of the preparations for the EXPO.

Following analyses and reports, including from Transparency Serbia (see www.transparentnost.org.rs/en/) and the European Commission (see https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6e68ce26-b95b-48e1-921a-c60c12da8f00_en?filename=serbia-report-2025.pdf) the special law (Official Gazette of RS 92/2023)), as well as accompanying regulations, restrict processes of transparent procurement and effective legal protection. Given that the Federal Republic of Germany participates in international expos and trade fairs according to public procurement notices and programme information, and at the same time links export promotion and risk mitigation instruments to integrity criteria, there is a legitimate interest in obtaining information regarding the Federal Government's current knowledge, contacts, risk assessments and conditions in connection with EXPO 2027 Belgrade.

Additionally, shortly before the end of the year, a reform of key judicial laws was passed through an accelerated procedure - without broad public debate and without expert opinion - which relates, among other things, to key aspects of judicial and prosecutorial independence. With regard to Serbia's EU accession path, it is of particular interest how the Federal Government assesses these developments and what conclusions it draws from them for its bilateral relations with Serbia.

1. Is the Federal Government aware of the 'Formal Notice' or comparable submissions by Serbian civil society actors to the BIE regarding EXPO 2027 Belgrade (cf. <https://betabriefing.com/news/politics/31784-citizens-ngos-launch-initiative-to-warn-bie-of-problems-related-to-expo-2027>) and if so, which ones (please provide date of receipt, recipients within the Federal Government, onward transmission between ministries)?

On 5 July 2025, a document entitled "Formal Notice Concerning Systemic Legal Violations, Corruption, and Safety Risks Related to Expo 2027 Belgrade, Serbia". The BIE posted the document on 24 October 2025 on its internal online platform, which is accessible to member states.

2. Has the Federal Government (or a German delegation) raised this issue in BIE bodies (General Assembly/Executive Committee/Working Groups) since Serbia's election as host on 21 June 2023 (please provide the date, forum, German mandate, and key content for each instance)?

The document mentioned in question 1 was discussed in the BIE Executive Committee on 23 September 2025. Germany is not represented on the BIE Executive Committee.

3. Which documents on the governance of EXPO 2027 (in particular the SEE Agreement between the BIE and Serbia) are available to the Federal Government, and what conclusions does it draw from them regarding integrity and compliance (please provide sources/contract designations, where publicly available)?

The Federal Government has documents that govern the implementation of the respective presentations of the participants at the 2027 World Expo in Belgrade. Within its remit, the BIE issues technical regulations for the conduct of a World Expo.

4. What is the Federal Government's assessment of the content and application of the Serbian special law for EXPO 2027 and the procurement exemptions it provides for?
5. Is it correct, to the best of the Federal Government's knowledge, that Article 14 of the Special Law exempts EXPO-related procurement via 'EXPO companies' from the regular procurement law (cf. www.transparentnost.org.rs/images/dokumenti_uz_vesti/Special_Law_for_EXPO_and_its_Implementation.pdf), and if so: What minimum standards (transparency, competition, legal protection) apply instead?

Questions 4 and 5 are answered jointly.

The Serbian Law on Special Procedures for the Implementation of the EXPO 2027 in Belgrade is known to the Federal Government. The Federal Government has no own findings regarding its application.

6. How does the Federal Government respond to the findings of the European Commission (see https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6e68ce26-b95b-48e1-921a-c60c12da8f00_en?filename=serbia-report-2025.pdf), that Serbia circumvents public procurement law through special laws (including for EXPO 2027) and that concerns remain regarding legal protection, etc. Deadlines exist (please specify the concrete passages)?

The Federal Government has taken note of the European Commission's Country Report on Serbia, published in the context of the enlargement package, and shares the European Commission's assessment in the relevant section 'Public Procurement'. As an EU accession candidate, Serbia is called upon to ensure that its national public procurement law is in line with EU acquis and is applied effectively.

7. What information does the Federal Government have regarding the volume of EXPO-related contracts already awarded outside the regular procurement law, and from which sources does this information originate?

The Federal Government has no information of its own.

8. What knowledge does the Federal Government have of reports that EXPO companies have awarded contracts of over €330 million with very low competition intensity (e.g. 86% 'single valid bid') (cf. www.transparentnost.org.rs/en/ts-and-media/press-issues/12922-with-the-constitutional-court-remaining-silent-expo-projects-continue-to-be-awarded-with-out-competition)?

The Federal Government has no information of its own.

9. Is the Federal Government aware of any companies that conduct or have conducted EXPO-related business on behalf of the Federal Government or other state institutions, and if so, which companies are these, and for which state bodies were or are they acting?

The Federal Government has commissioned companies to realise the German presentation at the 2027 World's Fair. Apart from this, no companies commissioned by a German government authority are active in connection with the 2027 World's Fair.

10. To what extent does the Federal Government examine whether German public funds or liability risks (directly or indirectly) could be affected by EXPO-related business of German companies (please list the instruments and audit points)?
11. What measures is the Federal Government taking to rule out corruption risks in the use of German funds in connection with EXPO 2027?
12. What audit and control mechanisms are in place to ensure the proper use of the funds?
13. What guidelines or recommendations does the Federal Government provide to German companies regarding compliance, anti-corruption and legally compliant procurement procedures in the context of the EXPO?

20. Which specific environmental, construction and labour-law standards does the Federal Government apply to its own involvement in the EXPO?
21. How does the Federal Government ensure that these standards are adhered to during implementation on the ground?
27. Which contracts/appointments in connection with the German EXPO participation have been announced by the Federal Government, and what anti-corruption and transparency clauses are standard for these?

Questions 10 to 13, 20, 21 and 27 are answered together.

The companies commissioned by the Federal Government to implement the German presentation at the 2027 World's Fair will be pointed out in the respective contracts to their obligation to comply with and take into account all legal, official, social legal and occupational accident insurance regulations, i.e. for example, the Criminal Code, the Act on the Regulation of a General Minimum Wage (MiLoG) or the Act on Mandatory Working Conditions for Cross-Border Detached and Regularly Employed Workers (AentG). The verification of the provision of the services is carried out by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy or by appropriately commissioned third parties, e.g. by inspecting documents or conducting on-site inspections.

14. Is the Federal Government aware of any Serbian regulations under which building, usage and safety requirements in the context of the EXPO have been, or are to be, simplified or deferred (e.g. provisional approval, technical commission; use of temporary structures), and how does it assess this in light of visitor and safety considerations?

The Federal Government has no information of its own.

15. What is the German Government's assessment of the collapse of the railway station canopy in Novi Sad on 1 November 2024 (16 fatalities) and of the resulting allegations of governance failures and corruption in Serbia, and what conclusions does it draw from this for its assessment of governance, procurement and safety risks in connection with EXPO-related projects?

The Serbian investigation into the collapse of the railway station roof in Novi Sad is not yet complete. The Federal Government is closely monitoring the progress of the investigation and the handling of the allegations.

16. What information does the Federal Government have on whether companies that were involved in the renovation of the Novi Sad railway station are also involved in EXPO construction projects?

The Federal Government has no information of its own.

17. What information does the Federal Government have regarding which staff members of government agencies or subordinate institutions involved in the renovation of the railway station in Novi Sad also hold roles in EXPO construction projects (in relation to permits, procedural matters, compliance with regulations, etc.)?

The Federal Government has no information of its own.

18. What knowledge does the Federal Government have of the warning issued in February 2025 by the Serbian Academy of Sciences (SANU) regarding the risks of 'irreversible environmental damage' and the endangered water supply infrastructure of Belgrade in connection with the EXPO plans (see <https://radar.nova.rs/drustvo/expo-opasan-po-zivot-nu-sredinu/>)?

The Federal Government has no information of its own.

19. What information does the Federal Government have regarding environmental impact/strategic environmental assessments and water law assessments for the EXPO site (particularly Belgrade/Surčin area), and has it raised these with Serbian authorities or in the EU context?

The Federal Government has no information of its own regarding the aforementioned examinations.

22. If Serbian legal norms apply to the construction measures related to the German participation - how do they differ in the three aforementioned areas (environment, construction and labour-law) from European and German standards?

The companies commissioned to implement the German participation's construction are contractually obliged to implement the higher of the two sets of requirements for fire protection and structural integrity.

23. Does the Federal Government have any information on whether and how Serbia has integrated national anti-corruption institutions or independent controls into the EXPO governance, and whether international standards in accordance with the UNCAC (United Nations Convention against Corruption) are being met?

The Federal Government has no information of its own.

24. What standards does the Federal Government use to assess 'systemic' corruption/state capture risks in partner countries in the context of foreign trade promotion and major international events, and have such criteria been applied to EXPO 2027 Belgrade?

The Federal Government uses various sources to assess corruption risks in foreign trade promotion and major international events. In the context of individual decisions on promotion or participation, recommendations and assessments from international organisations (e.g. the BIE in the context of World Expositions) play a role, as do, for example, location assessments from foreign missions.

International organisations (in the context of world exhibitions, for example, the BIE) can play a role, as can, for example, situation assessments from foreign missions.

25. What role do the reports of the EU Commission (the Serbia reports) play in the Federal Government's risk assessment regarding Germany's participation in and support for EXPO 2027, and are there any conditions derived from this?

The Federal Government considers various aspects when weighing up a decision to participate in a World Expo, including reports from the EU Commission.

26. What planned or ongoing services provided by German companies and institutions in connection with the EXPO projects are known to the Federal Government (e.g. consultancy, construction, planning, technical and exhibition services), and what due diligence requirements does it impose on such engagements?

The Federal Government has commissioned companies to deliver the German presentation at the 2027 World Expo. Beyond this, no German companies commissioned by the German government are active in connection with the 2027 World Expo.

28. What options is the Federal Government considering in the event that it is unable to ensure compliance with minimum standards regarding transparency, the rule of law, building safety and environmental protection (e.g. adjusting, restricting or terminating the involvement)?

The Federal Government is continuously and closely monitoring the local situation, project progress and discussions in the relevant international bodies, so that it can take appropriate action if necessary.

29. What mechanisms does the Federal Government consider for securely receiving tips from whistle-blowers or companies regarding EXPO-related corruption or compliance risks in Germany (internal reporting channels; the Federal Government's external reporting channel at the Federal Office of Justice), and how is the protection of the whistle-blowers ensured?

The Act for the Better Protection of Whistleblowers (Whistleblower Protection Act – HinSchG) enables all persons who have become aware of certain legal infringements in connection with their professional activities (§ 1 HinSchG) to make a corresponding report to an internal reporting body established on its basis at the relevant company or at the relevant authority or an external reporting channel, which is usually the Federal Government's central external reporting channel at the Federal Office for Justice. Violations of the regulations listed in Section 2 of the Whistleblower Protection Act (HinSchG) can be reported. These include, in particular, all offences punishable by a criminal penalty, thus including all corruption offences.

The processing of reports under the Whistleblower Protection Act is carried out with confidentiality regarding the identity of the person making the report (Section 8 of the HinSchG). Furthermore, Sections 33 et seq. of the HinSchG provide protective measures for persons making reports, in particular a prohibition on reprisals, which is punishable by a fine (Sections 36, 40(2)(3) of the HinSchG).

30. What knowledge does the Federal Government have of reports from the Serbian Labour Inspectorate regarding the lack of work permits for foreign workers and the employment of Serbian workers without registration with social security and without a contract of employment (www.cins.rs/en/illegal-works-on-the-expo-working-off-the-books-and-fleeing-from-construction-site/; <https://forbes.n1info.rs/biznis/propisi/otkriva-mo-na-ekspo-dosad-otkriveno-56-neprijavljenih-radnika-i-tri-slucaja-povreda-ovo-su-kompanije-i-preduzetnici-zateceni-u-prekrstvu/>), which were/are active on the EXPO grounds?

What knowledge does the Federal Government have regarding the content, procedures and criticisms of the Serbian judicial package (Mrđić Laws, adopted on 28 January 2026), including the EU assessment and the consideration by the Venice Commission; what documents does the Federal Government hold on this matter?

31. What assessment does the Federal Government make of whether and how these judicial reforms could affect the effective prosecution of corruption and organised crime (including the relevant special prosecutor's office), as well as international legal cooperation, and what consequences does this have for EXPO-related risk assessments?
32. What bilateral contacts have German authorities had with Serbian institutions (government, judiciary, public prosecutor's office) since the introduction of these judicial laws, and what position does the Federal Government take on this? (Please list the main topics of discussion and outcomes.)

Questions 30 to 32 are answered jointly.

The Federal Government has no information of its own.

On 24 April 2026, the Venice Commission issued a comprehensive opinion on the so-called 'Mrđić laws', adopted on 28 January 2026, which led to amendments in the Serbian judicial legislation. The implementation of the Venice Commission's recommendations is currently being discussed in Serbia, as well as between the Serbian government and the European Commission and the EU Member States. In principle, as an EU accession candidate, Serbia is called upon to ensure that its national judicial legislation is in line with the EU acquis. The Federal Government does not, as a rule, provide information on the content of individual political talks with foreign decision-makers.

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