

# MANFRED WEBER

**IMPACT:** Manfred Weber is a German politician who has served as President of the European People's Party (EPP) since 2022, and as Leader of the EPP Group in the European Parliament since 2014. He has been a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from Germany since 2004. He is a member of the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU), which is a member of the EPP. Weber has made statements alleging that Muslims and Islam are a threat to European culture.

- Manfred Weber has a degree in physical engineering from the Munich Higher Technical Institute (now Munich University of Applied Sciences). From 2003 to 2007, he led the Junge Union Bayern, the youth organization of the Christian Social Union, Bavaria's largest political party.
- **Weber is considered a devout Catholic Christian. He is a member of the National Committee of Catholics in Bavaria and the Central Committee of German Catholics**, and he presides over the circle of Friends of the Benedictine Abbey of Rohr. On his website, he mentions going to church weekly. Weber was a member of the Bavarian Parliament for two years before he entered European politics in 2004. **In 2019, he campaigned for the position of EU Commission President but lost against Ursula von der Leyen. He ran on the promise to do more for the protection and rights of Christians worldwide.**
- **Weber has made a name for himself primarily for his support of hawkish counter-terrorism policies.** Following the November 2015 coordinated attacks carried out by gunmen and suicide bombers in Paris, he argued, "In Germany [...] we have a file of dangerous persons that monitors the Islamist terrorist scene or the Islamist dangerous scene in Germany and the state criminal investigation offices exchange information, and we need exactly such a file of dangerous persons in Europe as well." In July 2017, the European parliament voted in favor of granting the mandate for a special committee on counter-terrorism, which goes back to a bilateral agreement between Manfred Weber and Guy Verhofstadt from the Liberals. The delegation of The Leftists (DIE LINKE) in the European Parliament voted unanimously against this mandate, stating, "this special committee will now further deepen and solidify the wrong and flawed approach to EU counterterrorism."
- **After the former Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP) announced plans to ban "political Islam" in November 2020, Weber reaffirmed Kurz's policy, stating: "The political arm of radical Islamists poses a threat to our liberal order in Europe. [...] Just as we act without compromise against right-wing and left-wing extremists, we must fight radical Islamists in the same way." **Weber reaffirmed his wish to create a Europe-wide list of dangerous persons and improve external border protection.****
- In March 2017, after the Austrian government headed by **the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) implemented a ban on face-veiling in public, a discussion on the same regulation began in Switzerland**. Several parties belonging to the Christian-Democratic European People's Party (EPP) decided to fight for what they called a "burqa ban" in the individual countries. **Manfred Weber told the Swiss newspaper BLICK, "The topic must be on the agenda for the Bundestag elections!"**
- In an April 2017 interview, **following disputes between the CSU and the Catholic Church in Germany's Bavaria regarding immigration, Weber argued that he was "for a strong voice of the church in the public."** In an August 2017 Facebook post, Weber wrote, "Migration, terrorism, climate change, digitization: my party family, the EPP, is the political force that is committed to defending our European way of life. We want a strong Europe that tackles the big issues and holds back on the small stuff."
- **Ahead of elections in Bavaria in October 2018, where Weber's center-right CSU felt challenged by the far-right Alternative for Germany, Weber made several moves to the far-right.** In March 2018, **Weber argued that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán "holds the key" to solving the EU's migrant problems, adding that "the fence construction along the Serbian border, which controls the migratory flows, deserves therefore not criticism, but our support."** **In 2015, Weber had already argued for more fences on Europe's borders** saying, "It

simply can't be that refugees in their hundreds of thousands are wandering uncontrolled through Europe." In April 2018, the right-wing media outlet *Breitbart News* covered a [story](#) with the title 'Islam Makes Little Contribution to Identity of Europe,' [quoting](#) Weber, then Vice-Chairman of the Christian Social Union (CSU), saying "Islam belongs just as little to Europe as it belongs to Germany." At the same time, he [argued](#) that "of course, today Muslims are part of Europe. On the positive side, there is a debate about the leading culture (Leitkultur) in Germany. Europe needs this debate too. We must defend our European lifestyle globally." This statement was a reaction to Chancellor Angela Merkel's [statements](#) that Islam "belongs to Germany," following CSU leader Horst Seehofer's [statement](#) that "Islam does not belong to Germany. Germany has been shaped by Christianity." Weber is further [quoted](#) in the *Breitbart* piece, describing the characterization of the dominant culture, the *Leitkultur*, as including "fundamental Christian values and education, equal rights for men and women, freedom of the media, democracy and the rule of law, and the social and ecological market economy. These basic principles are applied throughout Europe. In the majority of Muslim states, they are not part of the reality of life."

- In a 2010 [interview](#) with the *TAZ*, **Weber argued that "the description that Turkish citizens are part of society today is absolutely correct. However, the important question for us as the CSU is: What shapes this society? Islam cannot be that today. The Christian-Jewish heritage and the Enlightenment are fundamental."** In April 2018 following Easter Monday, he [shared](#) the following message: "If we want to defend our way of life we must know what determines us. Europe needs a debate on identity and dominant culture (Leitkultur)." His statement was accompanied by a photograph of the interior of a Catholic church. In response to his post, Ruth Reichstein, the spokesperson of the Green group, [replied](#), "Dear Manfred Weber – the Europe I want is an inclusive, free and tolerant Europe."
- In October 2019, **Weber criticized the European Union's funding of the [European Islamophobia Report](#) saying that "Muslim critics of Islam must not simply be placed under suspicion of Islamophobia."** His comment appeared to be in reference to the report's [highlighting](#) of individuals like [Mouhanad Khorchide](#) and [Ahmad Mansour](#), both of whom have played a role in promoting anti-Muslim stereotypes and tropes.
- In **November 2020, Austria carried out [Operation Luxor](#)**, which involved the "largest ever peacetime police raids," targeting the over 70 homes and organizations of Austrian Muslims. **Two days after the raids, Weber published a [tweet](#) thanking Austrian Chancellor Kurz for coming to the Group of the European People's Party and expressing his full support for the Chancellor's policies.** He stated, "#Austria has our full support to do all that is necessary to protect Europe against Islamic terrorism. It is not an abstract threat, they want to destroy our open and free societies. We will fight back. #ViennaAttack." **In August 2021, the raids [conducted](#) as part of [Operation Luxor](#) were declared unlawful by the Graz Higher Regional Court.**
- During the Italian elections, **Weber supported Silvio Berlusconi and his Forza Italia, who made an alliance with far-right leader [Georgia Meloni](#) from the Fratelli D'Italia and the far-right Lega.** He was [criticized](#) by several fellow politicians from his own CSU for supporting Berlusconi. Italian Five Star Movement's MEP Laura Ferrara [criticized](#) Weber for aligning with this party, stating that "Weber must explain to all Europeans why the party of De Gasperi, Adenauer and Schuman, the founding fathers of the European Union, in Italy sells out its identity and values to the extreme right that in the European Parliament expresses clearly Eurosceptic positions."
- After the Christian Union parties (CDU and CSU) were again in opposition after 16 years in power, Weber [published](#) an op-ed in February 2023, where he argued for the creation of a "real EU border" and urged the German government to "send significantly more officers to provide even more support to their Greek, Italian or Spanish colleagues at the EU's external borders."