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 Merz wants to make the German army the strongest in Europe

"We want to be able to defend ourselves so that we don't have to defend ourselves," Merz said.

Merz also spoke about getting the ailing economy back on track, saying the country is strong and could once again become a *Wachstumslokomotive* (growth engine) to which the world looks with admiration.

He said this success would be built on the hard work of millions of employees. The day before, he had remarked in a speech to business leaders that Germans should work harder and longer hours. "We will not be able to maintain the prosperity of this country with a four-day week and work-life balance," he said, taking a swipe at the young generation's work ethics.

Germans have long been known for their diligence, sense of duty, reliability and productivity. Recent data suggests that Germans are working fewer hours. But that doesn't tell the whole story.

A glance at current [OECD](#) labor figures can be startling. In 2022, the average American worked over 1,800 hours per year, while the average German worked only 1,340 hours. However, labor market researcher Enzo Weber from the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) in Nuremberg, Germany, dismisses suggestions of the once-industrious Germans now only wanting to enjoy their sweet lives.

"Germany has a very high female labor force participation rate compared to most other countries," Weber told DW, noting that the main difference to other countries was that about every second woman works [part-time](#), which mathematically lowers the average annual working hours. For example, if two men work 10 hours each in one country, the average [working time](#) there is 10 hours — $(10+10)/2 = 10$. But if, in another country, two

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men work 10 hours each and a woman works four hours, the average working time comes out to eight hours $(10+10+4)/3 = 8$.

REVISITING THE HOUSING CRISIS

The new government has identified the lack of affordable housing as one of the most important social issues and vowed to boost construction of rental housing with tax relief for builders, a reduction in bureaucracy in construction and reforming complex building standards.

So far, housing construction is lagging far behind population growth in urban areas. Rural areas are hemorrhaging population due to poor infrastructure there. The trend towards single households continues, and so does the misappropriation of living space for example to rent out to vacation guests via internet portals.

A German crime

in German but with English subtitles

<https://www.radiotimes.com/tv/drama/black-forest-murders-true-story/>

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