

Fasching und Karneval: Gesellschaften (societies)

die Gesellschaft, die Gesellschaften: society, club
die Sitzung, die Sitzungen: meeting to plan Carnival activities

Karneval – the societies

When to Celebrate Carnival in Germany:

The carnival season in Germany (also called the "Fifth Season") officially begins on November 11th, at 11:11 a.m. In this magic hour, the "Council of Eleven" comes together to plan the events for the upcoming festivities. The official hats of the councils' members: Colorful fool's caps with little bells.



The Local's Karneval guide separates Germany's jesters from its fools.

The organisations that provide the foot soldiers for the controlled chaos that is Karneval are the so-called "societies." There are nearly 5,000 of them throughout Germany and their members are known as *Karnevalsjecken* (Karneval jesters) that take part in the festival's multitude of parades. The societies are also responsible for the notorious *Karnevalssitzungen* – noisy, non-stop variety show-parties, where the audience is costumed and usually just drunk enough to keep clapping along to oompah music or laugh as often corny one-liners. Their defining purpose is to protect Karneval traditions, which is important as it gives them a different tax status.

Here are some of the main Karneval societies:

Festkomitee des Kölner Karnevals von 1823

This is not so much a single society but rather a protective and authoritarian umbrella for over a hundred Cologne-based Karneval clubs. It has taken charge of the Cologne Karneval since the modern era began in 1823. The Committee organises the *Rosenmontag* parade, appoints the triumvirate of presiding fools, known as the *Dreigestim* (the prince, peasant, and virgin) and occasionally makes judgements of taste, sometimes by [painting a bikini](#) on a giant Angela Merkel.