

Fasching und Karneval: Gesellschaften (societies)

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

Mainzer Carneval-Verein 1838

That English-looking "C" in the middle there is deliberate, stemming from archaic German spelling from a more innocent, pre-Duden time. This club is the oldest of the Mainz clubs, and the town of Mainz is the smallest of the three recognised Karneval "strongholds" (Cologne and Düsseldorf are the others). Mainz can therefore boast a higher Karneval-spirit-per-capita ratio than any other town. This club takes particular pride in its democratic structure, with members electing its [zany board of directors](#).

Prinzengarde der Stadt Düsseldorf

This club, [founded in 1928](#), has adopted a militaristic remit, seeing itself as the "personal bodyguards of the Karneval prince." They call their parade a march, themselves a "corps," and have taken to wearing bright red, faux-18th century uniforms complete with white wigs and frilly tricorne hats. When collected on a platform or float, they look like marzipan decorations on a cake. Their mascot is a donkey called "Strubbel," who joins them on their march.

Karnevals-Zug Berlin

This club was founded in 2000 to [introduce Karneval to Berlin](#), a Prussian and Protestant city with no real tradition of celebrating it. But these self-styled idealists beg to differ with the standard opinion, claiming Friedrich the Great himself was a fan. So far in its decade-long life, it has defied modern Berlin's too-cool-for-school attitude, and the club claims that a million people turn up every year for their traditional parade. This year's is on Sunday February 22.

The Sitzungen are usually held before the parties and big balls. This is done in order to really get you in the mood for all the great fun that lies ahead. I attended my first Sitzung two years ago, and understood why my parents had never taken me before. A Sitzung is meant for grown-ups or young adults only, since the performers joke about politics, sex, fashions, other countries or nations. They cover all current events, either in song, dance, or rhymed speech. I must admit it is really a gas — hilarious, ridiculous, and full of sarcasm. But it is a time where one can take fullest advantage of the freedom of speech. And those performers, behind the small-town dialect and the put on "ignoramus" act, are very intelligent and talented people, and they sure know how to get their point across with their humorous irony. Unlike the costume balls, the Sitzung is a very formal affair -- evening gowns, champagne, etc. But if you don't feel like going to all that trouble, you can sit comfortably at home and watch the whole thing on television. One of the most famous Sitzungen, "Mainz, wie es singt und lacht" is televised all over Germany and most of Austria each year. Despite the "foolish" cover-up, these Sitzungen contain much meaning and importance, and hidden truth. Therefore they are discussed later on in school, at the office, anywhere with anyone.