



## **Ursula von der Leyen**

**Germany (EPP)**

### **Family and Education**

Ursula von der Leyen was born on 8 October 1958, as the child of Ernst Albrecht, former Prime Minister of Lower Saxony, and his wife Heidi Adele Albrecht. She grew up in Brussels until 1971, where she attended the European School of Brussels before the family moved near Hanover. After graduating from high school in 1976, she studied economics at the Universities of Göttingen and Münster, with a stay abroad at the London School of Economics. Afterwards von der Leyen studied medicine in Hannover until 1987 and received her doctorate in 1991. During this time she married her husband, the professor of medicine and entrepreneur Heiko von der Leyen. Together they have seven children who were born between 1987 and 1999. In 2001 she also graduated with a Master of Public Health (M.P.H.).

### **Vocational and Academic Training**

From 1988 to 1992 von der Leyen worked as an assistant doctor in the gynaecological clinic of the Hanover Medical School. From 1992 to 1996 she lived in Stanford, CA, where she was a guest auditor at the Graduate School of Business of Stanford University and from 1995 worked as a market analyst for the Stanford Health Services Hospital Administration. Von der Leyen then served as Member of the academic staff, Department of Epidemiology, Social Medicine and Health System Research, Hanover Medical School.

### **Political Career**

Ursula von der Leyen joined the CDU in 1990, at the age of 32, and was initially hardly politically present. In 1999 she became a member of the Physicians' Working Group of the CDU of Lower Saxony. She then held various local political positions in the Hannover region from 2001 to 2004.

It was not until 2003 that her actual political career began. From 2003 to 2005 she was Member of the CDU in the State Parliament of Lower Saxony and Minister for Social Affairs, Women, Family Affairs and Health in Lower Saxony. Since December 2004 she was Member of the Presidium of the Christian Democratic Party of Germany.

She then began her political career at the federal level. A continuous sharpening of her profile can be seen in her career. Chancellor Angela Merkel can be regarded as the greatest promoter of her career. On 17 August 2005 she was appointed by Angela Merkel to the CDU/CSU competence team for the 2005 federal elections for the areas of family and health. From 2005 to 2009 she held the office of Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. One of her most important actions was the income-related parental allowance introduced in 2007. She was also instrumental in expanding the number of crèche places starting in 2007, and received a great deal of approval from the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Left Party and Alliance90/The Greens. In October 2009 she was elected a member of the German Bundestag and held the office of Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in the following legislative period. Since 2013, von der Leyen has held the office as the first female Minister of Defence, and now holds this office for the second consecutive legislative period. When she took office in 2013, the office was burdened with considerable inherited problems. First and foremost was the considerable armaments backlog of the German Bundeswehr. To date, the Minister has not been able to sufficiently solve the issue. Most prominent deficiencies are: the German G36 assault rifle, the MH90 naval helicopter or the Eurofighter. She scored better with the plan to make the Bundeswehr more attractive as an employer. Like other predecessors who didn't serve in the Bundeswehr themselves, von der Leyen continues to be in a rather difficult position in high-ranking military circles. Also in the media her work as a minister is mostly criticized. The criticism of von der Leyen's internal leadership of the Bundeswehr stems in particular from her comments on the 2017 terrorist investigation of a Bundeswehr soldier. She commented at the time: "The Bundeswehr has an attitude problem, and it obviously has a leadership weakness at various levels." This statement met with incomprehension and sharp criticism, especially in the circles of high-ranking military leaders.

## Political Career

### **Since December 2013**

Federal Minister of Defence

### **November 2009 - December 2013**

Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs

### **Since October 2009**

Member of the German Bundestag

### **November 2005 - November 2009**

Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

### **Since December 2004**

Member of the Presidium of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) of Germany

### **March 2003 - November 2005**

Minister for Social Affairs, Women, Family Affairs and Health in Lower Saxony

### **2003 - 2005**

Member of the CDU in the State Assembly of Lower Saxony

### **2001 - 2004**

Various local political positions in the region of Hanover

### **1999**

Member of the Physicians' Working Group of the CDU of Lower Saxony

### **Since 1990**

Member of the CDU

## Professional and academic career

### 1998 - 2002

Member of the academic staff, Department of Epidemiology, Social Medicine and Health System Research, Hanover Medical School (Medizinische Hochschule Hannover, MHH)

### 1995

Market analysis, Stanford Health Services Hospital Administration

### 1993

Auditing guest: Graduate School of Business, Stanford University

### 1992 - 1996

Lived in Stanford, California, USA

### 1988 - 1992

Assistant physician, Women's Clinic, Hanover Medical School

## Education

### 2001

Master of Public Health (M.P.H.)

### 1991

Doctorate

### 1987

State examination and license to practice

### 1980 - 1987

Studied medicine at Hanover Medical School

### 1978

London School of Economics

### 1977 - 1980

Studied economics in Göttingen and Münster

### 1971 - 1976

Attended grammar school with a special focus on mathematics and science, Lehrte

**1964 - 1971**

European School of Brussels