



Deutscher Bundestag

The Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection

Umweltausschuss

Informationen in englischer Sprache



**New
2023
version**
20th electoral term



“Only an ecologically intact world can be socially equitable and peaceful in the long term. To this end, we must preserve our natural resources for future generations, stop species from becoming extinct, and refrain from exceeding the planet’s limits when consuming resources. The Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection wants to help to drive forward solutions to the wide-ranging challenges. Whether the issue is cutting down on plastic waste, providing more space for threatened species and habitats, promoting sustainable consumption or searching for a disposal site for nuclear waste: saving a habitable world cannot be put on the backburner!”



Harald Ebner,
Alliance 90/The Greens
Chairman of the Committee on
the Environment, Nature
Conservation, Nuclear Safety
and Consumer Protection

The German Bundestag's decisions are prepared by its committees, which are established at the start of each electoral term. Four of them are stipulated by the Basic Law, the German constitution: the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Defence Committee, the Committee on European Union Affairs and the Petitions Committee.

The Budget Committee and the Committee for the Scrutiny of Elections, Immunity and the Rules of Procedure are also required by law. The spheres of responsibility of the committees essentially reflect the Federal Government's distribution of ministerial portfolios. This enables Parliament to scrutinise the government's work effectively.

The committees of the German Bundestag

The German Bundestag sets political priorities of its own by establishing additional committees for specific subjects, such as sport, cultural affairs, human rights or tourism. In addition, special bodies such as parliamentary advisory councils, committees of inquiry or study commissions can also be established. The committees are composed of members of all the parliamentary groups, reflecting the balance of these groups in the German Bundestag. The distribution of the chairs and deputy chairs among the parliamentary groups also reflects their relative strengths in the plenary. In the current electoral term, the committees have between 19 and 49 members.

The committees discuss and deliberate on items referred to them by the plenary. They also have the right to take up issues on their own initiative, allowing them to set priorities in the parliamentary debate. When necessary, they draw on external expertise – usually by holding public hearings. At the end of a committee’s deliberations – especially on bills and motions for which it is the lead committee – it adopts a recommendation for a decision and a report, which serve as the basis for the plenary’s decision.

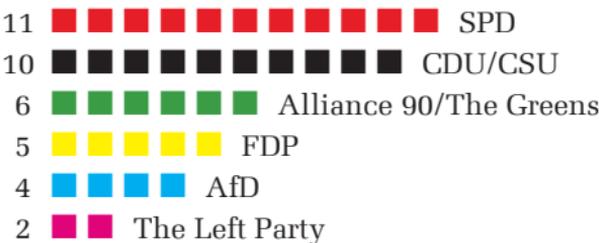
The Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection is concerned with the preservation of our natural resources. How can we conserve biodiversity, functioning ecosystems and the natural world, and use resources more efficiently? How should we respond to the rise in extreme weather events such as floods, storms and droughts? How can we keep our air and water clean? What should we do with nuclear waste? At the same time, the Committee also focuses on protecting consumers – for example when it comes to passenger rights, banking practices, or the conclusion of contracts online.

The Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection

The aim is to protect the public's legitimate interests and to strengthen their rights in relation to manufacturers, distributors and service providers. Consumer protection can then also benefit the environment, for example if our products last longer or can be repaired. Given the diversity of the topics it deals with, as well as the importance of environmental protection and sustainability, the Committee is not only involved in numerous legislative processes, but also has a part to play when, for example, countries around the world seek to agree new targets at international biodiversity summits. This is an area where the Committee plays an important role: supporting and monitoring political processes, and scrutinising the work of the Federal Government.

Increasingly, the Committee's work is also influenced by the European Union, as challenges relating to the environment and consumer protection do not stop at Germany's borders.

The 38 members of the Committee, chaired by Harald Ebner (Alliance 90/The Greens), have issues on their agenda which are of vital importance for people's lives and the future of our planet. They strive to objectively discuss subjects where emotions often run high: the safe storage of nuclear waste, soil and forest conservation, steps to cut air pollutants and marine litter, climate adaptation and biodiversity strategies, and the management of limited groundwater resources.



Number of members: 38

Chairman: Harald Ebner, Alliance 90/The Greens

Deputy Chairperson: Not yet elected

At first glance, environmental protection and nature conservation appear to have the same aim, but a closer inspection can reveal conflicting goals. Environmental protection is primarily about protecting the conditions for human life, whereas nature conservation seeks to conserve nature and landscapes because of their intrinsic value, as well as because they are the resources which support human life. And so, for example, expanding the role of renewable energy in order to meet climate targets and achieve energy independence can clash with nature and species conservation. This is not inevitable, however; smart solutions can strike a balance between both objectives.

These and other issues have to be weighed up and solutions sought. How can the Packaging Act be used to increase the recycling rate? How can clothing be produced more sustainably? One of the most important objectives in terms of nature conservation is preserving the diversity of animal and plant species – biodiversity. Above all, rapid steps need to be taken to counter the decline in insect populations. Species conservation is also a factor in limiting the use of pesticides in agriculture, for example, or restricting certain sites from being used to build new roads and houses.



In light of this, what needs to be achieved through agricultural policy, transport policy or building policy, alongside the steps taken in the field of environmental and energy policy? There is a great deal of crossover with the work of other committees. The members of the Committee on the Environment also draw on external expertise on complex issues – at public hearings or consultations, for example – and request regular briefings from government representatives.

Striking a balance between environmental concerns and the interests of other policy fields is often no easy task. Viewed from a purely short-term perspective, environmental protection can often seem at odds with economic interests. That is not the case, however. Both sides can benefit if the politicians specialising in environmental policy and those specialising in economic affairs work together to reach reasonable compromises which take both sets of interests into account.



As the composition of the committees reflects the balance of the parliamentary groups in the German Bundestag as a whole, the Committee's discussions also involve a clash of differing opinions: those of the six parliamentary groups, three of which are governing together. This provides plenty of fuel for intensive debates. One example is the phase-out of nuclear

power in Germany. Nuclear safety will remain an issue for a long time to come, however. Russia's attack on Ukraine has brought home to us, in an unprecedented manner, the danger posed by nuclear installations in warzones. Likewise, there will still be debates about nuclear power plants located close to Germany's borders, and the plants still operating within Germany. The Committee will also have to engage frequently with the search for a safe disposal site for radioactive waste, and its construction and operation.



Particularly in light of our responsibility towards future generations, the Committee on the Environment looks at the natural foundations of human life and health. One threat which was not recognised for a long time is the overuse of plastic, which has resulted in it now being present in all parts of our environment – especially rivers, seas and oceans – impacting the entire aquatic ecosystem.

The coronavirus pandemic has opened people's eyes to the vulnerability of the way in which our lives are intertwined, all around the world – and to the danger of zoonotic diseases as a result of the overuse of natural resources. This is another topic which is a high priority for the Committee. Stable ecosystems are the best preventive measure to ensure we can live a good life on our planet. In addition, the Committee is consulted on topics such as food security, the authorisation of genetically modified crops, or support for energy-efficient vehicles, and in this way it ensures that its opinion is taken into account in the legislative process.



Harald Ebner,
Alliance 90/The Greens
Chairman
Agricultural specialist,
b. 8 July 1964
in Göppingen.
Bundestag Member
since 2011



Deputy Chairperson
yet to be elected,
Deputy Chairperson



Committee members

The 38 members of the Committee on the Environment,
Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection

Carsten Träger,
SPD
Parliamentary-group
coordinator
Communication
specialist,
b. 25 Oct. 1973
in Fürth.
Bundestag Member
since 2013



Astrid Damerow,
CDU/CSU
Parliamentary-group
coordinator
Bank clerk, business
coach and trainer,
b. 30 Mar. 1958
in Bonndorf.
Bundestag Member
since 2017



Linda Heitmann,
Alliance 90/The Greens
Parliamentary-group
coordinator
Manager in the
addiction support
system,
b. 2 Aug. 1982
in Hamburg.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Judith Skudelny,
FDP
Parliamentary-group
coordinator
Lawyer,
b. 2 Oct. 1975
in Stuttgart.
Bundestag Member
from 2009 to 2013 and
since 2017



Andreas Bleck,
AfD
Parliamentary-group
coordinator
Office manager,
b. 17 Apr. 1988
in Neuwied.
Bundestag Member
since 2017



Amira Mohamed Ali,
The Left Party
Parliamentary-group
coordinator
Lawyer,
b. 16 Jan. 1980
in Hamburg.
Bundestag Member
since 2017



Jakob Blankenburg,
SPD
Political scientist,
b. 5 Aug. 1997
in Uelzen.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Axel Echeverria,
SPD
Employee,
b. 19 Mar. 1980
in Witten.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Nadine Heselhaus,
SPD
Civil servant,
b. 12 Oct. 1978
in Solingen.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Dr Franziska Kersten,
SPD
Farmer, veterinarian,
b. 19 Dec. 1968 in
Lutherstadt Wittenberg.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Helmut Kleebank,
SPD
Borough mayor,
b. 18 Nov. 1964
in Berlin.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Dunja Kreiser,
SPD
Senior wastewater
specialist,
b. 27 June 1971
in Wolfenbüttel.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Daniel Rinkert,
SPD
VDE regional manager,
b. 1 Dec. 1987
in Grevenbroich.
Bundestag Member
since 2022



Daniel Schneider,
SPD
Cultural events
organiser,
b. 11 Dec. 1976
in Cuxhaven.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Dr Lina Seitzl,
SPD
Political scientist,
b. 3 June 1989
in Lörrach.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Michael Thews,
SPD
Chemical engineer,
b. 6 Sep. 1964
in Bremerhaven.
Bundestag Member
since 2013



Alexander Engelhard,
CDU/CSU
Industrial engineer,
b. 26 Sep. 1972 in Ulm.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Oliver Grundmann,
CDU/CSU
Executive,
b. 21 Aug. 1971
in Stade.
Bundestag Member
since 2013



Christian Hirte,
CDU/CSU
Lawyer specialising
in tax law,
b. 23 May 1976
in Bad Salzungen.
Bundestag Member
since 2008



Anja Karliczek,
CDU/CSU
Former Federal
Minister, business
administrator, specialist
in the hotel business
and bank clerk,
b. 29 Apr. 1971
in Ibbenbüren.
Bundestag Member
since 2013



Klaus Mack,
CDU/CSU
Mayor,
b. 28 Apr. 1973
in Günzburg.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Volker Mayer-Lay,
CDU/CSU
Lawyer, mediator,
b. 22 June 1981
in Überlingen.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Björn Simon,
CDU/CSU
Political scientist,
b. 18 May 1981
in Offenbach.
Bundestag Member
since 2017



Dr Anja Weisgerber,
CDU/CSU
Lawyer,
b. 11 Mar. 1976
in Schweinfurt.
Bundestag Member
since 2013



Dr Klaus Wiener,
CDU/CSU
Economist,
b. 21 Aug. 1962
in Nordhorn.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Tessa Ganserer,
Alliance 90/The Greens
Forest engineer,
b. 16 May 1977
in Zwiesel.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Dr Jan-Niclas
Gesenhues,
Alliance 90/The Greens
Economist,
b. 12 Feb. 1990
in Karlsruhe.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



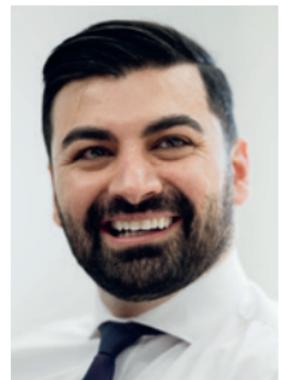
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Alliance 90/The Greens
Doctor,
b. 18 Mar. 1959
in Stuttgart.
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Tabea Rößner,
Alliance 90/The Greens
Journalist,
b. 7 Dec. 1966
in Sassenberg.
Bundestag Member
since 2009



Muhanad Al-Halak,
FDP
Senior wastewater
specialist,
b. 31 July 1989
in Diyala (Iraq).
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Ulrike Harzer,
FDP
Executive,
b. 13 June 1968
in Karl-Marx-Stadt
(now Chemnitz).
Bundestag Member
since 2021



Olaf in der Beek,
FDP
Self-employed,
b. 31 July 1967
in Bochum.
Bundestag Member
since 2017



Nils Gründer,
FDP
Student,
b. 23 May 1997
in Nuremberg.
Bundestag Member
since 2022



Jürgen Braun,
AfD
Self-employed
communications
consultant,
b. 25 Aug. 1961
in Bergeustadt.
Bundestag Member
since 2017



Thomas Ehrhorn,
AfD
Pilot,
b. 20 Mar. 1959
in Helmstedt.
Bundestag Member
since 2017



Dr Rainer Kraft,
AfD
Chemist,
b. 8 Jan. 1974
in Gräfelfing.
Bundestag Member
since 2017



Ralph Lenkert,
The Left Party
Toolmaker, state-
certified mechanical
engineering technician,
b. 9 May 1967
in Apolda.
Bundestag Member
since 2009



Information online

The Federal Ministry for the Environment,
Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
www.bmu.de



The Federal Environment Agency
www.umweltbundesamt.de



The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation
www.bfn.de



The Federal Office for Radiation Protection
www.bfs.de



The Federal Office for the Safety of Nuclear Waste Management
www.base.bund.de



The German Federal Environmental Foundation
www.dbu.de



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The Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation,
Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
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The German Bundestag takes decisions on what are at times highly complex and controversial bills and parliamentary initiatives relating to the entire spectrum of policy fields. The committees play a central role in parliamentary deliberations. They are the forum where the Members thrash out compromises and draw on expert advice before submitting their reports and recommendations for decisions to be voted on by the Bundestag as a whole.

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