The Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
“The Committee on the Environment is, for me, at the centre of politics, as this is where we decide whether we want to protect or continue to destroy the natural foundations of life. Environmental policy has a responsibility to all generations which will come after us. The climate crisis, insect population declines and plastic pollution are the biggest environmental problems today. Protecting the climate, without playing coal off against nuclear power; balancing the interests of people in the here and now with the rights of future generations; understanding that nature doesn’t need us, but we need it to survive – these are the aims I wish to work towards as Chairwoman.”

Sylvia Kotting-Uhl, Alliance 90/The Greens Chairwoman of the Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
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 the Affairs of the European Union and the Petitions Committee. The Budget Committee and the Committee for 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 Bundestag committees
The German Bundestag sets political priorities of its own by establishing additional committees for specific subjects, such as sport, cultural affairs 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 nine 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, a majority of its members adopt a recommendation for a decision and a report, which serve as the basis for the plenary’s decision.
The Committee on the Environment deals with questions relating to the preservation of the natural foundations of life. What instruments can we use to counter climate change? How should we respond to the rise in extreme weather events such as floods, storms and droughts? How can we conserve species diversity and the natural world? How can we use resources more efficiently? What should we do with nuclear waste? The diversity of the topics involved, together with the importance of environmental protection and sustainability, means that the Committee is
The 39 members of the Committee, chaired by Sylvia Kotting-Uhl (Alliance 90/The Greens), usually have issues on their agenda which attract close attention from the media and the public. They strive to objectively discuss subjects where emotions often run high – from the storage of nuclear waste, the phase-out of coal power generation in the medium term, the reduction of emissions of certain air pollutants, and steps to cut marine litter, to biodiversity conservation and the management of limited groundwater resources. This calls for sensitivity and the ability to strike a balance between different interests.

not only involved in numerous legislative processes, but also has a part to play when governments seek to agree new targets at international climate summits. This is an area where the Committee carries out one of the Bundes tag’s key functions: providing parliamentary support for and oversight of political processes, and scrutinising the work of the Federal Government.

14 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ CDU/CSU
8 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ SPD
5 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ AfD
4 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ FDP
4 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ The Left Party
4 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Alliance 90/The Greens

Number of members: 39
Chairwoman: Sylvia Kotting-Uhl, Alliance 90/The Greens
Deputy Chairman: Michael Thews, SPD
These interests also have to be taken into account when it comes to one of the biggest challenges facing us – achieving a significant reduction in Germany’s climate-damaging greenhouse gas emissions. To this end, the countries participating in the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris in 2015 agreed on a new climate agreement which aims to keep a global temperature rise “well below 2 degrees” Celsius. The European Union had already made a commitment in 2014 to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 per cent compared to 1990 levels by 2030.

The environment and nature conservation are listed first in the Committee’s name. At first glance, they may appear to serve a single objective, but on closer inspection their aims can clash at times. After all, protection of the environment primarily means protecting the conditions of human life.

The aim of nature conservation, by contrast, is to conserve nature and landscapes because of their intrinsic value, as well as their status as the resources which support human life. And so even a wind turbine can be a source of conflict – because, while environmentalists regard it as helping to meet climate targets since it produces renewable energy, conservationists might see it as a threat to bird habitats.
The Federal Government has undertaken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030. How these targets can be met is a contentious issue among experts. Where do we urgently need to change course? What form must a climate law take? And alongside the steps taken in the field of environmental and energy policy, how much has to be achieved through transport policy and agricultural policy? This is an area with many links to the work of other committees. Striking a balance between environmental concerns and the interests of other policy fields is no easy task. Viewed from a purely short-term perspective, environmental protection often seems to run counter to economic interests. That is not the case, however. The Members of the German Bundestag specialising in environmental policy have to reach prudent compromises with those specialising in economic affairs, just like the ministers for the environment and for economic affairs at government level. And because the composition of the committees reflects the balance of the parliamentary groups in the Bundestag as a whole, the Committee's discussions also involve a clash of differing opinions: those of six parliamentary groups, two of which are governing together. This provides plenty of fuel for intensive debates.
In 2011, a renewed decision was taken to phase out nuclear power. Nuclear safety will remain an issue for the Committee for a long time to come, however. A disposal site for nuclear waste needs to be found. The Commission on the Storage of High-Level Radioactive Waste established criteria for this during the last electoral term. Until the disposal of the radioactive waste finally takes place, however, the Committee on the Environment will continue to engage frequently with the search for a disposal site and with the safety of nuclear power plants.

One of the most important issues for the Committee in terms of nature conservation is preserving the diversity of animal and plant species, or 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.

One threat to our environment which was not recognised for a long time is overuse of plastic and the resulting pollution of our seas.
The Committee also marks the anniversaries of the nuclear disasters in Chernobyl (former Soviet Union) and Fukushima (Japan) by inviting experts for talks and discussing the global consequences of the use of nuclear energy. In addition, the Committee is consulted on a large number of topics, ranging from the Renewable Energy Sources Act, to support for energy-efficient vehicles, to applications for the authorisation of genetically modified crops, and in this way it ensures that its opinion is taken into account in the legislative process.
Committee members

The 39 members of the Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

Sylvia Kotting-Uhl, Alliance 90/The Greens
Chairwoman
Lecturer,
b. 29 Dec. 1952
in Karlsruhe;
two children.
Bundestag Member since 2005

Michael Thews, SPD
Deputy Chairman
Chemical engineer,
b. 6 Sep. 1964
in Bremerhaven;
unmarried;
one child.
Bundestag Member since 2013
Oliver Grundmann, 
CDU/CSU 
Lawyer,  
b. 21 Aug. 1971  
in Stade;  
married;   
three children.  
Bundestag Member 
since 2013

Rüdiger Kruse,  
CDU/CSU 
Executive,  
b. 10 June 1961  
in Hamburg;  
unmarried.  
Bundestag Member 
since 2009

Artur Auernhammer,  
CDU/CSU 
Farmer,  
b. 9 Mar. 1963  
in Oberhochstatt,  
Weißenburg.  
Bundestag Member  
from 2004 to 2005  
and since 2013

Astrid Damerow,  
CDU/CSU 
Bank clerk,  
b. 30 Mar. 1958  
in Bonndorf  
im Schwarzwald;  
made;   
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2017

Marie-Luise Dött,  
CDU/CSU  
CDU/CSU spokes-
woman on environ-
mental policy  
Retail clerk,  
b. 20 Apr. 1953  
in Nordhorn;  
made;   
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 1998

Hermann Färber,  
CDU/CSU 
Farmer,  
b. 26 Mar. 1963  
in Böhmenkirch,  
Baden-Württemberg;  
made;   
five children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013

Oliver Grundmann,  
CDU/CSU 
Lawyer,  
b. 21 Aug. 1971  
in Stade;  
made;   
three children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013

Astrid Damerow,  
CDU/CSU 
Bank clerk,  
b. 30 Mar. 1958  
in Bonndorf  
im Schwarzwald;  
made;   
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2017

Marie-Luise Dött,  
CDU/CSU  
CDU/CSU spokes-
woman on environ-
mental policy  
Retail clerk,  
b. 20 Apr. 1953  
in Nordhorn;  
made;   
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 1998

Hermann Färber,  
CDU/CSU 
Farmer,  
b. 26 Mar. 1963  
in Böhmenkirch,  
Baden-Württemberg;  
made;   
five children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013

Marie-Luise Dött,  
CDU/CSU  
CDU/CSU spokes-
woman on environ-
mental policy  
Retail clerk,  
b. 20 Apr. 1953  
in Nordhorn;  
made;   
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 1998
Torsten Schweiger, 
CDU/CSU
Electrical engineer, 
b. 29 Feb. 1968 
in Gräfenhainichen; 
marrided; 
one child. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Karsten Möring, 
CDU/CSU
Retired head teacher, 
b. 30 Aug. 1949 
in Schneverdingen; 
marrided; 
one child. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

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

Dr Klaus-Peter Schulze, 
CDU/CSU
Teacher, 
b. 3 July 1954 
in Döbern; 
marrided; 
three children. 
Bundestag Member since 2013

Volkmar Vogel, 
CDU/CSU
Equipment engineer, 
b. 18 Jan. 1959 
in Gera; 
marrided; 
two children. 
Bundestag Member since 2002

Michael Kuffer, 
CDU/CSU
Lawyer, 
b. 16 Mar. 1972 
in Munich; 
marrided; 
four children. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

Karsten Möring, 
CDU/CSU
Retired head teacher, 
b. 30 Aug. 1949 
in Schneverdingen; 
marrided; 
one child. 
Bundestag Member since 2017

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

Dr Klaus-Peter Schulze, 
CDU/CSU
Teacher, 
b. 3 July 1954 
in Döbern; 
marrided; 
three children. 
Bundestag Member since 2013

Volkmar Vogel, 
CDU/CSU
Equipment engineer, 
b. 18 Jan. 1959 
in Gera; 
marrided; 
two children. 
Bundestag Member since 2002
Kai Wegner,  
CDU/CSU  
Insurance clerk,  
b. 15 Sep. 1972  
in Berlin;  
two children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2005

Dr Anja Weisgerber  
CDU/CSU  
CDU/CSU spokeswoman on the  
Committee  
Lawyer,  
b. 11 Mar. 1976  
in Schweinfurt;  
marrried;  
two children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013

Ulli Nissen,  
SPD  
Bank clerk,  
b. 16 June 1959  
in Essen;  
marrried;  
two children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013

Detlev Pilger,  
SPD  
Vocational school teacher,  
b. 29 Apr. 1955  
in Koblenz;  
marrried;  
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013

Klaus Mindrup,  
SPD  
Biologist,  
b. 16 May 1964  
in Lienen, Westphalia;  
divorced.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013

Dr Nina Scheer,  
SPD  
Political scientist,  
lawyer, musician,  
b. 11 Sep. 1971  
in Berlin;  
unmarried;  
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013

Klaus Mindrup,  
SPD  
Biologist,  
b. 16 May 1964  
in Lienen, Westphalia;  
divorced.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013

Dr Nina Scheer,  
SPD  
Political scientist,  
lawyer, musician,  
b. 11 Sep. 1971  
in Berlin;  
unmarried;  
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013
Marc Bernhard, AfD
Lawyer, MBA, b. 5 Feb. 1972 in Reutlingen; divorced; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Andreas Bleck, AfD
Student, b. 17 Apr. 1988 in Neuwied; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2017

Karsten Hilse, AfD
Police officer, b. 12 Dec. 1964 in Hoyerswerda; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Michael Schrodi, SPD
Senior teacher, b. 3 July 1977 in Munich; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Frank Schwabe, SPD
Tour guide, b. 12 Nov. 1970 in Waltrop; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2005

Carsten Träger, SPD
SPD spokesman on the Committee Communications specialist, b. 25 Oct. 1973 in Fürth; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Frank Schwabe, SPD
Tour guide, b. 12 Nov. 1970 in Waltrop; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2005

Carsten Träger, SPD
SPD spokesman on the Committee Communications specialist, b. 25 Oct. 1973 in Fürth; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Michael Schrodi, SPD
Senior teacher, b. 3 July 1977 in Munich; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Andreas Bleck, AfD
Student, b. 17 Apr. 1988 in Neuwied; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2017

Karsten Hilse, AfD
Police officer, b. 12 Dec. 1964 in Hoyerswerda; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Michael Schrodi, SPD
Senior teacher, b. 3 July 1977 in Munich; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Andreas Bleck, AfD
Student, b. 17 Apr. 1988 in Neuwied; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2017

Karsten Hilse, AfD
Police officer, b. 12 Dec. 1964 in Hoyerswerda; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2017
Dr Lukas Köhler, FDP
Philosopher, b. 20 Aug. 1986 in Munich; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2017

Roman Müller-Böhm, FDP
Student, b. 12 Dec. 1992 in Essen; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2017

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

Dr Heiko Wildberg, AfD
Geologist, b. 19 May 1952 in Wilhelmshaven; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

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

Dr Heiko Wildberg, AfD
Geologist, b. 19 May 1952 in Wilhelmshaven; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Judith Skudelny, FDP
Lawyer, b. 2 Oct. 1975 in Stuttgart; married; two children. Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017

Dr Heiko Wildberg, AfD
Geologist, b. 19 May 1952 in Wilhelmshaven; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Judith Skudelny, FDP
Lawyer, b. 2 Oct. 1975 in Stuttgart; married; two children. Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017

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

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

Dr Lukas Köhler, FDP
Philosopher, b. 20 Aug. 1986 in Munich; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2017

Roman Müller-Böhm, FDP
Student, b. 12 Dec. 1992 in Essen; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2017
Hubertus Zdebels, The Left Party
Journalist, 
b. 29 Oct. 1954
in Elten, Emmerich.
Bundestag Member since 2013

Lisa Badum, Alliance 90/The Greens
Political scientist, 
b. 2 Oct. 1983
in Forchheim.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Ralph Lenkert, The Left Party
Toolmaker, mechanical engineer, 
b. 9 May 1967
in Apolda; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2009

Eva-Maria Elisabeth Schreiber, The Left Party
Ethnologist, 
b. 12 Mar. 1958
in Cologne; married; four children.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Caren Lay, The Left Party
Sociologist, 
b. 11 Dec. 1972
in Neuwied.
Bundestag Member since 2009

Dr Bettina Hoffmann, Alliance 90/The Greens
Biologist, 
b. 18 Jan. 1960
in Heimboldshausen; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Lisa Badum, Alliance 90/The Greens
Political scientist, 
b. 2 Oct. 1983
in Forchheim.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Dr Bettina Hoffmann, Alliance 90/The Greens
Biologist, 
b. 18 Jan. 1960
in Heimboldshausen; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2017
Steffi Lemke,  
Alliance 90/The Greens  
spokeswoman on the Committee  
Agricultural specialist,  
b. 19 Jan. 1968  
in Dessau;  
one child.  
Bundestag Member from 1994 to 2002 and since 2013

Marco Bülow,  
Non-attached Member  
Non-voting member  
Journalist,  
b. 14 June 1971  
in Dortmund.  
Bundestag Member since 2002
Information online

*The Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety*
www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a16

*The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety*
www.bmu.de/en

*The Federal Environment Agency*
www.umweltbundesamt.de/en

*The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation*
www.bfn.de/en

*The Federal Office for Radiation Protection*
www.bfs.de/EN

*Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (German Federal Environmental Foundation)*
www.dbu.de
Contact details for the Committee Secretariat

Deutscher Bundestag
Ausschuss für Umwelt, Naturschutz
und nukleare Sicherheit
Platz der Republik 1
11011 Berlin
Tel.: +49 30 227-37245
Fax: +49 30 227-36250
Email: umweltausschuss@bundestag.de
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.

www.bundestag.de/en/committees