The Committee on Foreign Affairs
“Germany’s growing international responsibility is reflected in the public’s increasing interest in foreign affairs – and that is a good thing, for our country can only live up to this responsibility in future with the public’s support. The Bundestag’s Committee on Foreign Affairs has an important part to play in this context. Its role in critically scrutinising the Federal Government’s foreign policy includes the task of giving the public a voice in the – usually – confidential process of decision-making on foreign policy and ensuring that the public’s questions and concerns are heard.”

Dr Norbert Röttgen, CDU/CSU Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs
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.
Fields of work, competences and tasks

Foreign policy is traditionally the preserve of the Federal Government, but the Bundestag’s influence in this area is growing. In practice, the Committee on Foreign Affairs is responsible for this policy field within the Bundestag. It ranks among Parliament’s largest committees and is one of just four committees whose establishment is required by the Basic Law. Its 45 members, chaired by Norbert Röttgen (CDU/CSU), discuss sensitive matters of foreign policy – and so the Committee’s meetings take place behind closed doors.

The Committee on Foreign Affairs
The parliamentarians request briefings from the Federal Government on foreign-policy issues and set out their views in debates. The Committee’s agenda generally reflects world political affairs from a German perspective. The work of the Committee is determined both by the fundamentals of German foreign policy, such as cooperation within the European Union, relations with Germany’s European neighbours, the transatlantic partnership and Germany’s special relationship with Israel, and by current developments, such as the situation in the Middle East, relations with Russia against the background of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and regarding the Crimean peninsula, China’s growing influence on world politics, and the situation in Afghanistan and other areas where the Bundeswehr is deployed. As a rule, the Committee’s discussions are objective rather than confrontational, with the aim of reaching a consensus. When it comes to cross-cutting issues such as the work of the United Nations, disarmament policy, crisis prevention and conflict management, and cultural and education policy abroad, the Committee on Foreign Affairs has set up special subcommittees.

Number of members: 45
Chairman: Dr Norbert Röttgen, CDU/CSU
Deputy Chairwoman: Dr Daniela De Ridder, SPD
Taking the right decisions on foreign-policy issues requires a wealth of detailed knowledge. Complex matters have to be analysed and assessed in the Committee’s deliberations. The Members of the Bundestag specialising in foreign affairs often have to deal simultaneously and at short notice with sometimes widely differing problems and events, as international developments do not abide by the Bundestag’s calendar of sittings. As a result, the Committee has a heavy workload and works under tremendous time pressure. Obtaining and analysing information – including confidential information – in good time is a prerequisite for the success of the Committee’s work.

The Bundestag’s role in foreign policy has been bolstered significantly by decisions of the Federal Constitutional Court. For example, the Court has ruled that the Bundeswehr’s deployment on armed missions outside Germany may not be decided by the Federal Government alone; instead, such decisions require democratic legitimacy in the form of the Bundestag’s consent. The Committee on Foreign Affairs takes the lead when it comes to preparing decisions of this kind, and to date the Bundestag’s plenary has not deviated from its recommendation in a single case.
The members draw on a wide range of information sources in their work. While written documents are essential, they are no substitute for directly sharing information and exchanging views in talks and discussions. Where necessary, the Committee on Foreign Affairs or its subcommittees organise public hearings with external experts on complex issues. The parliamentarians travel abroad to form their own first-hand impression of current events and developments, and make a wide range of contacts which can be helpful not just in the Committee’s work, but also in advancing German interests across the world. In turn, a large number of often high-level figures from around the world are keen to meet with the Committee on Foreign Affairs in Berlin – including heads of state and government. The Committee also maintains close contacts with parliamentarians worldwide; it engages in a regular dialogue with its counterpart committees in the French, Polish and Israeli parliaments. Members of Parliament have a key advantage on the international stage: they are not bound by diplomatic niceties and can send messages more discreetly – or more forthrightly – than is often possible in official diplomacy.
The diverse nature of foreign policy is reflected in the remits of the four subcommittees set up by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, each of which has nine members. The members of the Subcommittee on Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, chaired by Matthias Höhn (The Left Party), discuss current developments and long-running issues such as international efforts to control the global arms trade, the proliferation of small arms in crisis regions or the role of disarmament and arms control as elements of a global security architecture. The negotiations to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and on arms control in Europe are also on this subcommittee’s agenda.

As a member of the United Nations and many other international organisations and groups, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the G7 and G20 groups of leading economic powers, Germany can influence the process of shaping an international order based on common rules. The Subcommittee on the United Nations, International Organisations and Globalisation, chaired by Ulrich Lechte (FDP), follows the work of these organisations and groups and German policies in the relevant bodies and institutions, including the UN Security Council, of which Germany is a member in 2019 and 2020. The spectrum of topics dealt with by the Subcommittee is accordingly wide, stretching from the UN’s role in dealing with international crises to the future of the world trade system.
nations, is becoming increasingly important and is, as the “third pillar” of foreign policy, a regular subject on the agenda of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. For this reason, the Subcommittee on Cultural and Education Policy Abroad has once again been established, with Thomas Erndl (CDU/CSU) currently serving as acting chairman.

This Subcommittee requests regular briefings from the Federal Government about cultural and education work carried out abroad. Its members focus in particular on examining and supporting the work of the intermediary organisations commissioned by the Federal Government. These include, for example, the Goethe Institute, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen), German schools abroad, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), and a wide range of other organisations and foundations.

Ottmar von Holtz (Alliance 90/The Greens) chairs the Subcommittee on Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Management and Integrated Action. This Subcommittee helps to ensure that civilian crisis prevention is integrated into foreign policy in practice. Its work is guided by the belief that conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict peace-building can only succeed in the 21st century if military and civilian measures are integrated. This includes, for example, mediation between the parties to a conflict, disarmament programmes, support for democracy, and assistance in judicial, administrative and police capacity-building. Cultural and education policy abroad, as a means of promoting understanding between
Committee members

The 45 members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs
Manfred Grund,
CDU/CSU
Electrical engineer,
b. 3 July 1955
in Zeitz;
mixed; four children.
Bundestag Member
since 1994

Jürgen Hardt,
CDU/CSU
Economist,
b. 30 May 1963
in Hofheim am Taunus;
mixed; one child.
Bundestag Member
since 2009

Roderich Kiesewetter,
CDU/CSU
Business administrator,
b. 11 Sep. 1963
in Pfullendorf
(Sigmaringen county);
mixed; two children.
Bundestag Member
since 2009

Peter Beyer,
CDU/CSU
Lawyer,
b. 25 Dec. 1970
in Ratingen;
two children.
Bundestag Member
since 2009

Thomas Erndl,
CDU/CSU
Electrical engineer,
b. 22 July 1974
in Osterhofen;
mixed; three children.
Bundestag Member
since 2017

Markus Grübel,
CDU/CSU
Federal Government
Commissioner for
Global Freedom of
Religion,
former Parliamentary
State Secretary,
retired notary,
b. 15 Oct. 1959
in Esslingen am Neckar;
mixed.
Bundestag Member
since 2002

Thomas Erndl,
CDU/CSU
CDU/CSU spokesman
on foreign affairs
Economist,
b. 30 May 1963
in Hofheim am Taunus;
mixed; one child.
Bundestag Member
since 2009

Peter Beyer,
CDU/CSU
Electrical engineer,
b. 3 July 1955
in Zeitz;
mixed; four children.
Bundestag Member
since 1994

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CDU/CSU
CDU/CSU spokesman
on foreign affairs
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CDU/CSU
Federal Government
Commissioner for
Global Freedom of
Religion,
former Parliamentary
State Secretary,
retired notary,
b. 15 Oct. 1959
in Esslingen am Neckar;
mixed.
Bundestag Member
since 2002
Dr Andreas Nick, CDU/CSU
Business administrator, Master of International Public Policy, b. 26 Apr. 1967 in Koblenz-Moselweiß; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2013

Gisela Manderla, CDU/CSU
Environmental consultant, b. 11 Feb. 1958 in Düsseldorf; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2018

Markus Koob, CDU/CSU
Political scientist, b. 5 Dec. 1977 in Kronberg im Taunus; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2013

Nikolas Löbel, CDU/CSU
Business administrator, b. 17 May 1986 in Mannheim; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2017

Elisabeth Motschmann, CDU/CSU
Former State Secretary at Land level, b. 13 Oct. 1952 in Lübeck; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Nikolas Löbel, CDU/CSU
Business administrator, b. 17 May 1986 in Mannheim; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2017

Gisela Manderla, CDU/CSU
Environmental consultant, b. 11 Feb. 1958 in Düsseldorf; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2018

Dr Andreas Nick, CDU/CSU
Business administrator, Master of International Public Policy, b. 26 Apr. 1967 in Koblenz-Moselweiß; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2013

Michaela Noll, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 24 Dec. 1959 in Düsseldorf; married. Bundestag Member since 2002

Michaela Noll, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 24 Dec. 1959 in Düsseldorf; married. Bundestag Member since 2002
Dagmar Freitag, SPD
Teacher, b. 3 Mar. 1953 in Letmathe.
Bundestag Member since 1994

Dr Barbara Hendricks, SPD
Former Federal Minister, b. 29 Apr. 1952 in Kleve; married.
Bundestag Member since 1994

Josip Juratovic, SPD
Car mechanic, b. 15 Jan. 1959 in Koprivnica, Croatia; married; three children.
Bundestag Member since 2005

Alexander Radwan, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, engineer, b. 30 Aug. 1964 in Munich; unmarried.
Bundestag Member since 2013

Christian Schmidt, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 26 Aug. 1957 in Obernzenn; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 1990

Frank Steffel, CDU/CSU
Business administrator, b. 2 Mar. 1966 in Berlin; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2009

Christian Schmidt, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 26 Aug. 1957 in Obernzenn; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 1990

Frank Steffel, CDU/CSU
Business administrator, b. 2 Mar. 1966 in Berlin; married; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2009
Dr Bärbel Kofler, SPD
Linguist, b. 24 May 1967 in Freilassing, Bundestag Member since 2004

Aydan Özoğuz, SPD
Philologist, b. 31 May 1967 in Hamburg; married; one child. Bundestag Member since 2009

Thomas Oppermann, SPD
Lawyer, b. 27 Apr. 1954 in Freckenhorst, Warendorf county; four children. Bundestag Member since 2005

Dr Nils Schmid, SPD
Lawyer, SPD spokesman on the Committee

Christoph Matschie, SPD
Theologian, mechanic, b. 15 July 1961 in Mühlhausen; three children, Bundestag Member from 1990 to 2004 and since 2017

Dietmar Nietan, SPD
Employee, b. 25 May 1964 in Düren; married; two children. Bundestag Member from 1998 to 2005 and since 2009

Christoph Matschie, SPD
Theologian, mechanic, b. 15 July 1961 in Mühlhausen; three children. Bundestag Member from 1990 to 2004 and since 2017

Dietmar Nietan, SPD
Employee, b. 25 May 1964 in Düren; married; two children. Bundestag Member from 1998 to 2005 and since 2009

Dietmar Nietan, SPD
Employee, b. 25 May 1964 in Düren; married; two children. Bundestag Member from 1998 to 2005 and since 2009

Christoph Matscie, SPD
Theologian, mechanic, b. 15 July 1961 in Mühlhausen; three children. Bundestag Member from 1990 to 2004 and since 2017

Dietmar Nietan, SPD
Employee, b. 25 May 1964 in Düren; married; two children. Bundestag Member from 1998 to 2005 and since 2009

Christoph Matscie, SPD
Theologian, mechanic, b. 15 July 1961 in Mühlhausen; three children. Bundestag Member from 1990 to 2004 and since 2017

Dietmar Nietan, SPD
Employee, b. 25 May 1964 in Düren; married; two children. Bundestag Member from 1998 to 2005 and since 2009
Petr Bystron, AfD
AfD spokesman on the Committee
Political scientist, b. 30 Nov. 1972 in Olmütz; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Dr Roland Hartwig, AfD
Lawyer, b. 22 Sep. 1954 in Berlin; divorced; five children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Dr Anton Friesen, AfD
Research assistant, b. 15 June 1985 in Uspenska, Kazakhstan; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2017

Waldemar Herdt, AfD
Agricultural specialist, b. 28 Nov. 1962 in Zabelovka, Kazakhstan; married; four children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Armin-Paulus Hampel, AfD
Journalist, b. 23 July 1957 in Bielefeld; married; four children. Bundestag Member since 2017

Paul Viktor Podolay, AfD
Medical technician, b. 30 May 1946 in Preßburg; married; two children. Bundestag Member since 2017
Ulrich Lechte,
FDP
Business administrator,
b. 26 Aug. 1977
in Sinsheim;
mixed.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Frank Müller-Rosentritt,
FDP
Business administrator,
b. 13 June 1982
in Chemnitz;
mixed; three children.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Renata Alt,
FDP
Chemical engineer,
b. 27 Aug. 1965
in Skalica;
mixed.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Bijan Djir-Sarai,
FDP
FDP spokesman on the Committee
Business administrator,
b. 6 June 1976
in Tehran, Iran.
Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017

Alexander Kulitz,
FDP
Entrepreneur, lawyer,
b. 12 Aug. 1981
in Tübingen;
mixed; one child.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Ulrich Lechte,
FDP
Business administrator,
b. 26 Aug. 1977
in Sinsheim;
mixed.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Renata Alt,
Sevim Dağdelen,
The Left Party
Journalist,
b. 4 Sep. 1975
in Duisburg;
unmarried.
Bundestag Member
since 2005

Heike Hänsel,
The Left Party
Specialist in nutritional
science and home
economics,
b. 1 Jan. 1966
in Stuttgart;
unmarried.
Bundestag Member
since 2005

Stefan Liebich,
The Left Party
The Left Party spokes-
man on the Committee
Business administrator,
b. 30 Dec. 1972
in Wismar;
divorced.
Bundestag Member
since 2009

Kathrin Vogler,
The Left Party
Executive,
b. 29 Sep. 1963
in Munich;
marrried; one child.
Bundestag Member
since 2009
Jürgen Trittin, Alliance 90/The Greens
Social scientist, b. 25 July 1954
in Bremen; married; one child.
Bundestag Member since 1998

Omid Nouripour, Alliance 90/The Greens
Self-employed adviser, b. 18 June 1975
in Tehran, Iran; married; one child.
Bundestag Member since 2006

Manuel Sarrazin, Alliance 90/The Greens
Historian, b. 6 Feb. 1982
in Dortmund; two children.
Bundestag Member since 2008

Dr Frithjof Schmidt, Alliance 90/The Greens
Social scientist, b. 17 Apr. 1953
in Bad Harzburg.
Bundestag Member since 2009

Jürgen Trittin, Alliance 90/The Greens
Social scientist, b. 25 July 1954
in Bremen; married; one child.
Bundestag Member since 1998
Information online

The Committee on Foreign Affairs
www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a03

The Federal Foreign Office
www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en

The EU
http://europa.eu/index_en.htm

The UN
www.un.org

NATO
www.nato.int

The German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)
www.swp-berlin.org/en

The German Council on Foreign Relations
https://dgap.org/en
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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.

www.bundestag.de/en/committees