The Committee on the Digital Agenda
“The digital revolution and the rise in global interconnectedness are transforming the world in which we live, and this has to be monitored, shaped and analysed by Parliament. Policy-makers therefore need to keep their eye on the ball in order to shape technical innovations in a way that makes them useful for everyone, if possible. In this context, the Committee on the Digital Agenda is the driving force in advancing the digital revolution both within the German Bundestag and in our economy and our society.”

Jimmy Schulz, FDP
Chairman of the Committee on the Digital Agenda
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 digital revolution is changing the world. It offers major opportunities in all areas of life and has the power to improve people’s lives. At the same time, however, the challenges facing policymakers and society are equally vast. There will be a ten-fold increase in the amount of data available in 2025 compared to 2016. We need new knowledge and skills to enable us to select, analyse and evaluate the information available online. This raises questions relating to data security, consumer protection and media literacy, but also copyright. The internet is also transforming the relationship between the state and the public, and offers greater opportunities for participation.

The Committee on the Digital Agenda
In the last electoral term, the Bundestag established the Committee on the Digital Agenda, setting up a permanent parliamentary body for digital policy for the first time. The development of digital media was a recurring issue in the work of various committees during earlier electoral terms. A milestone was finally reached with the work of the Study Commission on the Internet and Digital Society in the 17th electoral term (2009–2013). Among the many recommendations set out in its final report was the suggestion that a permanent committee on digital policy should be set up in Parliament.

The prerequisite for this, however, is for everyone to have an equal chance to partake in the opportunities of the digital transformation. Policy-makers and society must find answers to the challenges posed by digital technologies. They must communicate the advantages, raise awareness of the risks, and establish the parameters for the digital transformation.

7 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ CDU/CSU
5 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ SPD
3 ■ ■ ■ AfD
2 ■ ■ FDP
2 ■ ■ The Left Party
2 ■ ■ Alliance 90/The Greens

Number of members: 21
Chairman: Jimmy Schulz, FDP
Deputy Chairman: Hansjörg Durz, CDU/CSU
In the current electoral term, the Committee on the Digital Agenda will continue to discuss far-reaching issues relating to digitalisation and interconnectedness, across all policy fields, and pave the way for our country to develop into a strong digital hub. The 21 members took up their work at the Committee’s constituent meeting on 31 January 2018. The Committee examines cross-cutting issues which touch on various policy fields and aspects of people’s lives, and for which no one ministry at government level or committee in Parliament is responsible.

Rather than having items referred to it as the lead committee, the Committee on the Digital Agenda is usually asked for its opinion on items of business, and passes on the results of its deliberations to the lead committees. In addition, lead committees and committees asked for their opinion can hold joint meetings on cross-cutting issues and pool their expertise in debates. The Committee sees itself as an important catalyst for Parliament’s work on all digital policy issues. This is shown in particular by the public hearings and consultations to which experts from the business community, academia and civil society are invited, on subjects such as
the start of the current electoral term, and Dorothee Bär, Member of the Bundestag, was appointed to this role.

The Federal Government has set challenging goals in its coalition agreement: a world-class digital infrastructure nationwide, teaching digital skills as a key skill for all age groups, and a working world which empowers and protects people in the digital revolution and enables them to enjoy greater quality of life.

Other objectives include regulation which encourages competition, a higher level of cyber security, greater responsiveness to the public’s needs via a modern, digital administration, and a legal framework
The large number of topics means that the Committee members have to deal with a wealth of information. They receive bills, motions and reports from a wide range of ministries – whenever the lead committee designated by the Bundestag needs the expertise of the politicians specialising in digital affairs. Items relating to European and international topics also feature on the Committee’s agenda. The Committee thus not only scrutinises the Federal Government’s policies, but also participates in the European decision-making process via its recommendations and key issues papers.

which guarantees civil rights and strikes a balance between freedom and security, while at the same time facilitating greater innovation. In the framework of Parliament’s scrutiny of the Federal Government’s work, these are also key issues for the Committee on the Digital Agenda.
A report published by the Federal Government on international cooperation in education, academia and research, a government report on the security of its networks in light of current hacker attacks and a discussion about the German Video Game Awards may seem, at first glance, to have little in common. And yet they can all be found on the agenda of the Committee on the Digital Agenda. For, like so many issues today, they touch on digital policy. Support for the digital industry, data protection, copyright, net neutrality and big data are issues which the Committee wants to drive forward in political terms. The sweeping nature of digital policy is shown by the subjects on the Committee’s agenda, which may include the future of the automotive industry, the National Education Report, or the digital revolution in the agricultural sector. A large number of printed papers land on the Committee members’ desks. They consider the pros and cons of these parliamentary initiatives in the working groups set up by their parliamentary groups and debate them in the Committee.
European and international issues are regularly referred to the Committee. These include, for example, the EU cyber defence policy framework or the European Commission’s green paper on mobile health. Many of these printed papers also involve follow-up documents from the EU or statements from the Federal Government. A European Parliament resolution on new technologies and open educational resources might also be among the subjects discussed by the Committee during a week when Parliament is sitting.

The Committee on the Digital Agenda attaches particular importance to international dialogue with experts from the political field, business and the media. It sets its own priorities in this context, gains a complete picture of the digital revolution, and is a key point of contact in Germany when it comes to digital policy issues.
Close links were already established with France in the last electoral term. At the start of the current electoral term, a meeting was held with a delegation from the South Korean parliament, at which the impact of the digital revolution on Industry 4.0 and Work 4.0 was discussed, as well as data protection, digital infrastructure and the development of 5G technology. In addition, the Committee members met the Norwegian State Secretary for digitalisation and the modernisation of public services, Paul Chaffey, and discussed eGovernment, data security and open data.
Committee members

The 21 members of the Committee on the Digital Agenda
Ronja Kemmer, CDU/CSU
Economist, b. 3 May 1989 in Esslingen am Neckar; married. Bundestag Member since 2014

Stefan Sauer, CDU/CSU
Business administrator, former mayor, b. 14 Jan. 1966 in Rüsselsheim; married. Bundestag Member since 2013

Tankred Schipanski, CDU/CSU

Maik Beermann, CDU/CSU
CDU/CSU spokesman on the Committee Savings bank business administrator, b. 19 Oct. 1981 in Nienburg an der Weser; married; three children. Bundestag Member since 2013

Matthias Hauer, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 18 Dec. 1977 in Hattingen; unmarried. Bundestag Member since 2013

Thomas Heilmann, CDU/CSU
Lawyer, b. 16 July 1964 in Dortmund; unmarried; four children. Bundestag Member since 2017
Saskia Esken, 
SPD
IT specialist, 
b. 28 Aug. 1961 
in Stuttgart; 
married; three children. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2013

Falko Mohrs, 
SPD
Business administrator, 
b. 23 July 1984 
in Wolfsburg; 
unmarried. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2017

Gustav Herzog, 
SPD
Chemical laboratory 
technician, 
b. 11 Oct. 1958 
in Harxheim, 
Palatinate; 
married; two children. 
Bundestag Member 
since 1998

Dr Jens Zimmermann, 
SPD
SPD spokesman on the Committee 
Business administrator, 
b. 9 Sep. 1981 
in Groß-Umstadt; 
unmarried. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2013

Elvan Korkmaz, 
SPD
Public administration 
specialist, 
b. 27 July 1985 
in Gütersloh. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2017

Joana Cotar, 
AfD
AfD spokeswoman on the Committee 
Self-employed, 
b. 6 Apr. 1973 
in Pitesti, Romania; 
mARRied. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2017

Saskia Esken, 
SPD
IT specialist, 
b. 28 Aug. 1961 
in Stuttgart; 
married; three children. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2013

Falko Mohrs, 
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Business administrator, 
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Joana Cotar, 
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Self-employed, 
b. 6 Apr. 1973 
in Pitesti, Romania; 
mARRied. 
Bundestag Member 
since 2017
Anke Domscheit-Berg,
The Left Party
spokeswoman on the Committee
Columnist and journalist,
b. 17 Feb. 1968 in Premnitz;
married; one child.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Uwe Schulz,
AfD
Senior manager,
b. 12 Dec. 1961 in Gießen;
marrried.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Dr Petra Sitte,
The Left Party
Economist,
b. 1 Dec. 1960 in Dresden;
unmarried.
Bundestag Member since 2005

Uwe Schulz,
AfD
Senior manager,
b. 12 Dec. 1961 in Gießen;
marrried.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Dr Petra Sitte,
The Left Party
Economist,
b. 1 Dec. 1960 in Dresden;
unmarried.
Bundestag Member since 2005

Manuel Höferlin,
FDP
FDP spokesman on the Committee,
FDP spokesman on digital policy
IT entrepreneur,
b. 6 Feb. 1973 in Paris;
marrried; three children.
Bundestag Member from 2009 to 2013 and since 2017

Anke Domscheit-Berg,
The Left Party
spokeswoman on the Committee
Columnist and journalist,
b. 17 Feb. 1968 in Premnitz;
marrried; one child.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Dr Michael Espendiller,
AfD
Mathematician,
Parliamentary Secretary of the AfD parliamentary group in the Bundestag,
b. 5 May 1989 in Leonberg; unmarried.
Bundestag Member since 2017
Dr Anna Christmann, Alliance 90/The Greens
Political scientist, b. 24 Sep. 1983
in Hanover; married; one child.
Bundestag Member since 2017

Dieter Janecek, Alliance 90/The Greens
spokesman on the Committee
Political scientist, b. 25 May 1976
in Pirmasens; married; three children.
Bundestag Member since 2013

Uwe Kamann, Non-attached Member
Non-voting member
Entrepreneur, business adviser,
b. 19 Aug. 1958 in Magdeburg;
marrid; three children.
Bundestag Member since 2017
Information online

The Committee on the Digital Agenda
www.bundestag.de/en/committees/a23

Information on the digital agenda
from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy

Information on IT and internet policy from the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community
www.bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/it-internet-policy/it-internet-policy-node.html

Information from the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure
www.bmvi.de/EN

Information on the digital single market
from the European Commission
Contact details for the Committee Secretariat

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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