



Deutscher Bundestag

**The Parliamentary  
Advisory Council  
on Sustainable Development**





“When taking decisions today, policy-makers must focus on sustainability. You could say that policies must be designed with our grandchildren in mind. The Advisory Council on Sustainable Development raises awareness of the need for us to think globally in the decisions we take today and to always consider the implications for tomorrow’s world.”



Dr Andreas Lenz, CDU/CSU  
Chairman of the Parliamentary  
Advisory Council on  
Sustainable Development

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.

We must not live at tomorrow's expense – that is the basic principle of sustainability. We shouldn't consume more than can be replaced in future. The term and concept of sustainability date back to 18th-century forestry practices, when people were only permitted to log as much wood as could grow back. This ensured that the forest remained available for future use and maintained its value over the long term. The concept later moved beyond this original context, evolved and entered into political and academic usage.

## **Sustainability – a responsibility and obligation towards the present and the future**

Sustainability is an ethical principle which, as a cross-cutting issue, requires a holistic view of the challenges facing society. It brings together our responsibility to those alive today with our responsibility to future generations. It also applies to the actions of every individual. Rather than being limited solely to environmental protection and nature conservation, sustainability also encompasses the full spectrum of issues relating to the environment, the economy and social affairs.

In 1987, the Brundtland Commission established by the United Nations put forward a definition in its report *Our Common Future*. It stated that societal development is only sustainable if it “meets

the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Sustainability policy brings together many interwoven strands of policy, which can no longer be considered independently of each other.

Instead, it is essential to integrate them and strike the right balance in pursuing them. And of course, sustainability is not a subject which stops at national borders; it is also a key issue in international cooperation.

- 6 ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ CDU/CSU
- 3 ■ ■ ■ SPD
- 2 ■ ■ AfD
- 2 ■ ■ FDP
- 2 ■ ■ The Left Party
- 2 ■ ■ Alliance 90/The Greens

Number of members: 17

Chairman: Dr Andreas Lenz, CDU/CSU

Deputy Chairwoman: Dr Nina Scheer, SPD

The concept of sustainable development was first established as a global guiding principle at the UN Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Building on this, the heads of state and government of the UN's 193 Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a pact on the world's future, in New York on 25 September 2015. It is based on the conviction that global challenges can only be resolved by working together, and that, to this end, the guiding principle of sustainable development must be applied consistently across all policy fields and in every country.

After all, sustainable policy-making relates not only to species diversity, climate protection and the consumption of natural resources and energy, but also to the development of the financial markets, public debt, and economies' potential for innovation. At the same time, other vital issues are also at stake: social cohesion, food, health, gender equality and social-security systems.

Overview of the 17 international Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enshrined in the UN's 2030 Agenda





## The work of the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development

The Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development was first established in 2004. Since then, it has supported and scrutinised the Federal Government's sustainability policy, working across party lines and taking a cross-cutting approach. In the current electoral term, the 17 members of the Advisory Council, chaired by Andreas Lenz (CDU/CSU), want to continue the constructive work carried out in recent years. The members take up issues in response to current events and set targeted priorities in their work.

At the heart of this Bundestag body's work is a shared conviction that the Parliamentary Advisory Council can achieve the most in terms of promoting systematic sustainable development if its members reach a consensus. The Advisory Council is therefore unaffected by shifting majorities and can bring a high degree of continuity to its work, across party lines.



One of the Advisory Council's key tasks is examining and assessing the Federal Government's bills and statutory instruments. The assessment is based on the SDGs, Management Rules, indicators and goals set out in the German Sustainable Development Strategy. In the last electoral term, the Advisory Council assessed and reached a cross-party consensus on more than 800 government initiatives; where necessary, it submitted critical opinions to the lead committees and federal ministries. To date, the assessment process has examined formal requirements, with the aim of raising awareness of sustainability issues. In the current

electoral term, the sustainability impact assessment process is to be developed further. The idea behind this is to allow future assessments of individual government initiatives to focus more on their impact on sustainable development. The Advisory Council also plays an active role in debates about sustainable development and in the process of updating the Federal Government's National Sustainability Strategy. It provides constructive input regarding changes to the indicators and instruments. In addition, the Advisory Council forges links



between key players in sustainable development and integrates them into the political process, via hearings, communications, motions for resolutions, opinions and position papers.

The Advisory Council also intensively scrutinises and supports the Federal Government's sustainability policy at European level, particularly in the framework of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy. It presses for this overarching strategy to be better anchored in the EU's institutional structures. In addition to sharing information in Brussels and Berlin, the Advisory Council makes use of parliamentary instruments such as communications and motions for resolutions in this context, too.

The principle of sustainability should form part of the political bedrock. It is the bridge between today and tomorrow, between generations, between policy-makers, businesses, society and the environment. In short, sustainability helps in striking a balance between economic, environmental and social objectives.



Dr Andreas Lenz,  
CDU/CSU  
*Chairman*  
Business administrator,  
b. 23 Apr. 1981  
in Ebersberg;  
unmarried.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



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



## Advisory Council members

The 17 members of the Parliamentary Advisory Council  
on Sustainable Development

Sybille Benning,  
CDU/CSU  
Landscape manager,  
b. 8 Jan. 1961  
in Münster;  
married;  
four children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



Matern von Marschall,  
CDU/CSU  
Publisher,  
b. 3 Aug. 1962  
in Freiburg  
im Breisgau;  
married;  
two children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



Professor  
Claudia Schmidtke,  
CDU/CSU  
Cardiac surgeon, MBA  
in Healthcare  
Management,  
b. 29 Mar. 1966  
in Neumünster.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2017



Peter Stein,  
CDU/CSU  
Urban planning  
architect,  
b. 18 Jan. 1968  
in Siegen;  
married;  
two children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



Kai Whittaker,  
CDU/CSU  
*CDU/CSU spokesman  
on the Advisory  
Council*  
Economist,  
b. 10 Apr. 1985  
in Baden-Baden;  
unmarried.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



Michael Thews,  
SPD  
*SPD spokesman on  
the Advisory Council*  
Chemical engineer,  
b. 6 Sep. 1964  
in Bremerhaven;  
unmarried;  
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



Bernd Westphal,  
SPD  
Trade union secretary,  
chemical laboratory  
technician,  
b. 30 Sep. 1960  
in Hildesheim;  
married;  
three children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2013



Dr Rainer Kraft,  
AfD  
*AfD spokesman on  
the Advisory Council*  
Chemist,  
b. 8 Jan. 1974  
in Gräfelfing;  
married;  
two children.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2017



Dr Dirk Spaniel,  
AfD  
Engineer,  
b. 3 Nov. 1971  
in Marburg;  
married;  
one child.  
Bundestag Member  
since 2017



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



Professor  
Martin Neumann,  
FDP  
*FDP spokesman on  
the Advisory Council*  
Mechanical engineer,  
b. 27 Jan. 1956  
in Vetschau;  
widowed;  
two children.  
Bundestag Member  
from 2009 to 2013  
and since 2017



Thomas Lutze,  
The Left Party  
*The Left Party  
spokesman on the  
Advisory Council*  
Mechanical engineer,  
b. 23 Aug. 1969  
in Elsterwerda;  
married;  
one child.  
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



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



Gerhard Zickenheiner,  
Alliance 90/The Greens  
Architect,  
b. 1 Apr. 1961  
in Lörrach;  
married; two children.  
Bundestag Member  
since Jan. 2019



## **Information online**

*The Parliamentary Advisory Council  
on Sustainable Development*

[www.bundestag.de/en/committees/bodies/sustainability](http://www.bundestag.de/en/committees/bodies/sustainability)



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