

Close them down!

Climate protection is a growth driver

The climate and the environment are growth drivers for the economy and the labour market. Protecting the climate and safeguarding the environment is the only way to achieve sustainable economic growth and to make progress in the fight against hunger and social injustice – that is one of the Greens' founding tenets. An awareness of the pending climate catastrophe has finally reached a broader public in recent years. In this legislative period, the Green parliamentary group offered answers to the most pressing problems of our times – how to protect the climate, secure the energy supply, maintain biodiversity, feed the world's population and create new jobs.

We will only get the crisis in the economy and the climate under control by moving towards sustainable production and sustainable consumption. We have developed concepts for fundamentally transforming industrial society. Around 1.8 million people already worked in environmental protection in 2006. With ambitious environmental policies, we Greens aim to boost this number to three million by 2020, thus also adding impetus to the ecological modernisation of our society.

Energy 2.0 – the future lies in renewable energies, not nuclear energy or coal

We do not need dangerous nuclear power plants or filthy coal-fired power plants to maintain a reliable supply of electricity. Consistent climate protection is only possible without nuclear or new coal-fired power plants. With its Energy 2.0 concept, the Green parliamentary group has worked out that it all comes down to three factors: efficiency, energy saving and renewable energies.

Green measures will reduce Germany's electricity consumption by 16 percent by 2020. By then, 40 percent of the country's needs will be covered by renewable energies, 30 percent by high-efficiency cogeneration and only 30 percent by traditional power plants. This will enable us to reach our climate protection targets, while also ensuring supply reliability, economic growth and new jobs. This way, 100 percent renewables could be attained by 2050.

Using electricity more efficiently and saving energy

We want to turn Germany into the world's most energy-efficient economy. Huge volumes of electricity can be saved in private households and industry. Our Energy 2.0 concept provides for an electricity saving fund to finance information campaigns and support electricity saving. Not only that, we have planned more ambitious electricity efficiency standards for electrical appliances, intend to optimise the Renewable Energies Act and build an intelligent European electricity grid. This will enable us to save at least 115 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from electricity consumption.

Almost 60 percent of our energy consumption is used to produce heat, so it is crucial to achieve savings in this area. The Energy 2.0 concept foresees tightening up the Energy Saving Ordinance, improving building renovation and better promoting cogeneration. This way, we can save at least a further 115 million tonnes of CO₂ from heating. If we avoid cars, switch to buses, trains and cycling and make greater use of renewable energies, then we can reduce our CO₂ emissions by at least a further 50 million tonnes.

Getting around by bike, bus or train

The government's transport policy is a disaster. Traffic plays an every greater role in global warming, but the government has failed to promote environmentally-friendly, safe mobility.

The core of Green transport policy is mobility by foot, bike, bus and train. Our parliamentary initiatives aimed to boost investment in local public transport, railways and the National Cycling Plan. We also supported model projects to promote equal rights of use in areas used by all (shared space projects).

In the debates surrounding the privatisation and data scandal at Germany's national railway company, Deutsche Bahn, our parliamentary initiatives helped to avert the company's stock market flotation and to oblige Hartmut Mehdorn, the company's boss, to step down. For long-distance rail travel we have unveiled plans for a "Timetable for Germany", a synchronised nationwide timetable based on the Swiss model to ensure that services focus on customers' actual needs.

Green Cars – making cars greener

If we continue to use our cars as we do now, then we will crash the climate. Almost one fifth of global CO₂ emissions are due to road traffic. With our Green presentation at the International Motor Show (IAA) in Frankfurt, we communicated what we see as necessary for an ecologically-driven car policy. Our Green Car concept provides for ambitious CO₂ emissions targets for new cars: 120 g/km by 2012 and 80 g/km in 2020. We want to see a speed limit of 120 km/h on the motorways and a vehicle tax which exempts energy-efficient cars and taxes large, thirsty vehicles in line with their emissions. The tax privileges granted to large, gas-guzzling company cars must be abolished.

The Grand Coalition shot down our motions. Instead, it pushed through an automobile policy which massively hinders innovation: watered-down or postponed CO₂ targets, five billion euros for an ecologically blind car-scrapping incentive scheme and a botched vehicle tax reform. These favours to large companies will prevent climate protection from finally gaining a foothold in the car industry.

Electric mobility with green electricity

In terms of their technology, electric cars are already ready for mass production. We intend to subsidise each purchase with Euro 5,000 initially, thus enabling a market to be established. After all, these vehicles will still be significantly more expensive than their conventional counterparts, especially in the first few years. Our strategy for promoting electro-mobility envisages scrapping the electricity tax on electricity from renewable sources. This way, we aim to ensure that electric cars use green electricity from the very start. The Green target is to have two million electric cars by 2020 – a sustainable outlook for the German car industry.

Supporting climate protection in local government

Without the commitment of towns and local councils, climate protection will go up in a puff of smoke. Buildings account for up to 40 percent of end energy consumption. Around 40,000 schools and 50,000 kindergartens alone are in the hands of local councils. We want to help them save energy. In an expert report, we showed that the Federal Government can do so, even if constitutional restrictions prevent it from getting involved directly. We have demonstrated how construction and public procurement law can be amended to allow us to promote climate protection in local government.

That pays off many times over. It benefits the climate and secures jobs in local trades, while the energy saved helps to reduce the financial burden on local government and private households alike. The money saved here by towns and local councils could be used, for example, to invest in schools and day care facilities.

Protecting the climate with wise tax policies

Tax policy is another area where the Federal Government has failed to take any steps to combat climate

change. Quite the reverse – it actually supports climate change by taxing green electricity and sustainably produced bio-fuels, while offering tax relief for large company cars and even exempting fuels harmful to the climate, such as kerosene, from tax altogether. The Grand Coalition intends to support the construction of new coal-fired power plants harmful to the climate with subsidies worth billions taken from the proceeds from emissions trading.

Our climate protection budget aims to turn this around. We would immediately abolish subsidies harmful to the environment and the climate, amounting to seven billion euros in total. The money saved should be invested sensibly – in climate protection, education and social justice.

Maintaining that which maintains us

Biodiversity is crucial for humankind's survival. Maintaining this is just as urgent a global challenge as climate protection. The extinction of species and climate change are intrinsically linked and require common solutions.

The ninth conference of the states which have signed up to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) took place in Bonn in May 2008. With numerous parliamentary initiatives we pressed Sigmar Gabriel, the Federal Environment Minister, not just to hold laudable speeches, but actually to take his role as CBD President seriously and to implement what he calls for on the international stage in his own country. The government must create an integrated, efficiently managed system of biotopes on land and at sea. We also want Germany to play a greater role in protecting the rain forests – Green initiatives which the government coalition hindered with support from the FDP.

Protecting the natural world and humankind from gene technology

The ban on MON810 maize cultivation represents a victory for the anti-gene technology movement in Germany – and a victory for the commitment shown by the population, farmers, beekeepers and by environmental and consumer associations and Green politics. With its current criticism of gene technology, on the other hand, the CSU is evidently just trying to win over voters. Ilse Aigner, the Federal Agriculture Minister, banned genetically modified maize to great media effect but promptly went on to allow large-scale trial cultivation of Amflora, a genetically modified potato type.

We Greens, by contrast, brought in parliamentary motions and questions to ensure that the use of genetic technology in agriculture continued to be discussed in parliament throughout the legislative period. We unmasked the lip service paid by CSU and SPD to anti-gene technology motions. We demand an EU-wide ban on genetically modified plants, which pose a threat to the population, the environment and agriculture. We campaign for regions free of gene technology. Countries and regions must be able to decide for themselves whether they want to have gene technology in their fields or not, irrespective of approval on EU level.

Safeguarding the agricultural turnaround and protecting nutrition

Intelligent agriculture can help to address the problems of hunger, climate change and the extinction of species jointly and sustainably. On a European level, we have campaigned for agricultural payments to be managed ecologically and in a socially responsible manner – public money in return for services towards society. The Grand Coalition has attempted to reverse the success of the agricultural turnaround initiated by Renate Künast. We oppose this and are fighting for ecological agriculture, species-appropriate husbandry, fair global trade and healthy, residue-free food.

Global policy for energy, security and social justice

Energy has now reached the very top of the foreign policy agenda. The race for the planet's final gas, oil and uranium reserves is in full swing. It's all about power, influence and pipelines. By contrast, we Greens are relying on our concept for sustainable external energy relations – a global policy for energy, security and justice. After all, the greatest threats of our time are linked to how we generate and consume energy – climate change, growing poverty, the race for scarce raw materials and the pursuit of atomic weapons.

We want the whole world to get away from oil, gas and uranium and move towards renewable energies, efficiency and energy saving. A secure global energy supply represents an active contribution to crisis prevention and is a matter of social justice. Without affordable energy for all, the battle against poverty is already lost. There can be no energy security for Germany or Europe alone, neither is any individual state able to avert the climate catastrophe. We can only achieve energy, security and social justice if we join forces around the whole world.

Further information about this topic -->

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On www.gruene-bundestag.de >> Plenum >> Initiativen (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/initiativen/rubrik/4/4544.html>) you can find the following green motions (in german):

- BT-Drs. 16/11023 Sustainably investing in the climate, education and social justice (motion) (*Nachhaltig investieren in Klima, Bildung, soziale Gerechtigkeit*)
- BT-Drs. 16/9009 Taking seriously the role model function played by politics in climate protection (motion) (*Vorbildfunktion der Politik für Klimaschutz ernst nehmen*)
- BT-Drs. 16/11915 Strategy for subsidising electro-mobility with green electricity (motion) (*Förderstrategie für Elektromobilität mit grünem Strom*)
- BT-Drs. 16/11206 Phasing out subsidies harmful to the climate and the environment (motion) (*Klima- und umweltschädliche Subventionen abbauen*)
- BT-Drs. 16/10202 Strengthen gene-technology-free regions (motion) (*Gentechnikfreie Regionen stärken*)
- BT-Drs. 16/12308 Stop milk export subsidies immediately (motion) (*Milch-Exportsubventionen sofort stoppen*)
- BT-Drs. 16/8181 Energy, security, social justice (motion) (*Energie, Sicherheit, Gerechtigkeit*)

On www.gruene-bundestag.de >> Fraktion >> Beschlüsse (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/beschluesse/rubrik/3/3814.html>) you can find the parliamentary group resolutions (in german):

- Green car concept
- Energy 2.0 – Green measures by 2020 (*Energie 2.0 – Die grünen Maßnahme*)
- Consistent implementation of integrated approach to biodiversity policy (*Biodiversitätspolitik als Querschnittsaufgabe consequent umsetzen*)n bis 2020)

Further topics

Jobs (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/english/dok/306/306468@de.html>)

Social Justice (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/english/dok/306/306474@de.html>)

Freedom (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/english/dok/306/306475@de.html>)

Green Global (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/english/dok/306/306507@de.html>)

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