Greenpeace – of uncommon benefit

Commitment and responsibility for the environment and society
Greenpeace is celebrating its 45th birthday in Germany in 2020. Its last big anniversary ten years ago was already an occasion to look back at several decades of successful work on protecting the environment. Boris Palmer, Tübingen’s mayor at the time, said: “The worst excesses of visible environmental destruction are behind us thanks to Greenpeace.” Some 74 percent of Germans believed Greenpeace at its 30th birthday to be at least as important as when it was founded – if indeed not more so. If Greenpeace had been a political party it would have garnered 26 percent of the popular vote – and as much as 30 percent in the 18 to 29 year age group – which would have qualified it to participate in a German government coalition. After that anniversary it launched many more successful campaigns and expanded its successful work on keeping the planet habitable and liveable for our children and grandchildren.

Greenpeace can boast of having more than 600,000 donors – but it also has powerful enemies. Some of them would like to see the environmental organisation’s non-profit status withdrawn to make it harder for Greenpeace to criticise their activities. Under German law, having non-profit status benefits an organisation – donor support is tax-deductible, for example – and this facilitates and enables the important work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), associations and charity groups.

Greenpeace gives fresh impetus to technology, science and education  

Greenpeace gives fresh impetus to technology, science and education. It describes and summarises the narrative of how Greenpeace has always guided us: We Don’t Wait – We Take Action! Today, institutions like Greenpeace, Welthungerhilfe (global food aid organisation) and Amnesty International already do a tremendous amount of work to improve the living conditions of millions of people and promote human rights, said then German president Horst Köhler on 27 March 2009 in Frankfurt’s historic St. Paul’s Church on the 165th anniversary of Germany’s first constitution. Environmental protection is now ‘one of the widely accepted responsibilities of society’. Greenpeace has played a key role in this change in values, said Hans-Werner Sinn, then president of theifo Institute. Chancellor Angela Merkel praised ‘especially the continuous and expert work with which Greenpeace contributes to public debate on unique topics.’ When Greenpeace Germany moved to its new office in Hamburg’s Hafencity district in 2013, Olaf Scholz, then mayor of the city, said at the opening ceremony: “Being committed and willing, at Greenpeace often without fear of personal risk or consequences – to intervene and care, to resolutely help and take a clear position, and these are not contradictory but complementary attitudes – that’s important for our city, and we are pleased to have Greenpeace at this location in Hamburg.”

The list of our contributions to protecting the environment and our success stories is a long one. This report will give you an impression of Greenpeace’s work. It describes and summarises the narrative of how Greenpeace campaigns encouraged and triggered positive developments – for the environment and for society. We will continue undeterred as our motto has always guided us: We Don’t Wait – We Take Action!

Roland Hipp  
Executive Director, Greenpeace Germany

Martin Kaiser  
Executive Director, Greenpeace Germany
It all began when Greenpeace took action

When Greenpeace was founded in 1971 in Canada, the attitude of many countries toward environmental protection and shared responsibility was quite different from today’s. Nearly all states asserted their sovereignty and felt completely free to exploit and consume natural resources – and to despoil landscapes. Oceans, atmosphere and climate were regarded as global public goods, which meant states felt entitled to use or abuse them within their own territories as they wished, barely perceiving any shared international responsibility. The high seas had recently been recognised as humanity’s common heritage – but initially only to allocate the deep sea’s mineral resources. The atmosphere, the abundance of fish in the oceans, biodiversity and large forests were not considered part of this common heritage.

Many states behaved accordingly. Above-ground nuclear bomb testing filled the atmosphere with radioactive fallout, drums filled with nuclear waste were thrown overboard into the North Sea, and dinitole acid was dumped into ocean waters. Whales and seals were hunted without restraint, and industrial emissions polluted whole landscapes and shortened human life expectancy. These emissions crossed national borders, threatening the life support base in entire regions in a way that only major wars had ever done. This was hardly compatible with human rights or international law – the exercise of human rights presupposes that people dwell in a healthy, habitable and biologically diverse environment.

At that time, states were actually rather blind to their own legitimacy, their raison d’être. States do not exist for their own sake. Their legitimacy depends on their ability to fulfil the purpose of the state. This includes keeping peace and ensuring the safety of citizens, guaranteeing freedom and social justice, and at the latest since World War II, safeguarding the natural life support base of humans. “Due to its legislative monopoly, the state alone is in a position to decide on the nature and extent of using or polluting the environment. It therefore bears the responsibility for ensuring that the allowed use of the environment does not destroy it,” explains Diether Murswiek, an expert in German constitutional law, adding: “And the state can and must prohibit forbidden environmental pollution by exercising its exclusive right to use physical force.”

The violation of its duty to preserve the natural foundations of human life undermines the legitimacy of the state and the liberal constitution.”

Greenpeace refused to accept the irresponsible behaviour of many states. It chose to courageously protect our life support base rather than take on the role of victim, as others had done before. Activists were prepared to be confrontational, even against the governments of the United States, France, the Soviet Union and Germany. The organisation chartered ships to have a presence on the high seas and in polar regions; it researched crimes against the environment and documented them for the public. This was a completely new approach, different from that of traditional environmental and nature protection groups, who limited their work mostly to conserving national and international legislation. It’s activities have driven forward international law. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like Greenpeace, the Red Cross and Amnesty International are now recognised as having legal value in international law. The conflict between Shell and Greenpeace over the dumping of the Brent Spar oil platform in 1995 could have been submitted jointly by both parties to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in Hamburg, underlined that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea had made it possible for Greenpeace and other NGOs to play an active role in the assertion of environmental protection in international law. The conflict between Shell and Greenpeace over the dumping of the Brent Spar oil platform in 1995 could have been submitted jointly by both parties to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for a decision. As “a partial international law subject”, Greenpeace undoubtedly works for the common good in the community of international law – an individual state could hardly question this. Greenpeace actions have – even if initially appearing unlawful – repeatedly contributed to the development of national and international legislation. Some especially important Greenpeace campaigns have culminated in the Antarctic Environmental Protocol (1991), the ban on dumping oil rigs at sea (1998) and the ban on tributyltin (TBT) in antifouling ship paints (2001).

Some more recent successes have included court decisions which have strengthened the rights of German citizens to argue with nuclear power utilities – among them the 2013 decision handed down by Schleswig Holstein’s Higher Administrative Court revoking the licence for the interim storage of nuclear waste at the decommissioned Brunsbüttel nuclear power plant because the risk of a possible terrorist attack on the plant had not been taken fully into account. Greenpeace is regularly invited to international conferences and listened to by parliamentarians. Germany’s Federal Constitutional Court has asked Greenpeace to submit expert opinions as a knowledgeable third party. The organisation stimulates debate and provides expertise, and it has provided legal support to plaintiffs.

Greenpeace is above party lines, financially independent, and does not accept funds from governments, political parties or industry. Any individual donation of 5,000 euros or more is scrutinised. If the money comes from a commercial enterprise, it is returned. More than 600,000 donors provide the financial base for Greenpeace; they are the financial base for Greenpeace; they are a large and effective group of citizens and promote the further ecological development of our society.

Michael Günther
Attorney
Greenpeace protects the life support base for our children

Nation states can no longer deal alone with the world’s societal and ecological problems. International non-governmental organisations like Greenpeace therefore have an ever more important role to play. They make important contributions by bringing environmental crimes to light, naming those responsible, and proposing solutions that prioritise the common good. Successful campaigns in one country often set a signal for work in other countries and regions.

Climate and energy: Germany initiated the energy transition – with thanks to Greenpeace

Greenpeace was one of the first organisations to campaign in Germany for the expansion of renewable energies. As early as 1986, after the reactor meltdown in Chernobyl and in actions against plans to build a nuclear waste reprocessing plant in Wackersdorf, Greenpeace banners made this clear, stating: “We Count on the Sun” and “Sunshine instead of Plutonium”. In 1990, Greenpeace toured German rivers and canals with a floating exhibition on renewable energies and against nuclear power. Count on the Sun” and “Sunshine instead of Pluto-

Greenpeace was one of the first organisations to campaign in Germany for the expansion of renewable energies and against nuclear power. This was followed in 1991 by another exhibition: ‘The Sun Is the Future’. Politicians and industry were very sceptical at the time as conventional wisdom dictated that solar, wind and hydropower could never meet more than a very low share of the country’s energy needs. But Greenpeace was not put off. In major campaigns it repeatedly reminded the public of the hazards of nuclear power and coal combustion. It put solutions forward, showing how Germany could successfully achieve an energy transition as well as protect the climate. It modelled specific scenarios and worked hard to persuade decision-makers in politics and business of their validity. In doing so, the organisation and activists often took risks, faced hostility and were threatened with legal consequences.

And today? Today renewable energies cover a 36 percent share of gross power consumption. They still wanted to keep earning profits from old NPPs, regardless of strong political and public opposition to nuclear power. Germany’s Federal Constitutional Court asked Greenpeace for an opinion as an expert third party. The decision which the court handed down in 2016 concurred on essential points with Greenpeace’s opinion, and the court also referred explicitly to comments by Greenpeace on several points and based its decision partly on Greenpeace’s statements. During the proceedings, Greenpeace was awarded a great deal of recognition for its commitment.

Greenpeace was early to show that a full transition to renewables could be achieved in Germany by 2050. The decision to phase out nuclear energy was a first key step toward a safe energy future. The next step will be to phase out coal – central to enabling Germany to achieve the goals set in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Greenpeace is actively involved in showing the way forward. Members of the German Commission on Growth, Structural Change and Employment (in short, the Coal Commission) set up by the federal government in 2018, include Greenpeace and other civil society actors who advocate a specific schedule for phasing out coal. A compromise reached early in 2019 was the first step toward an exit from coal, and after years of inertia, the climate policy debate in Germany was revived. When Greenpeace first proposed detailed legislation in 2008 for phasing out coal fuel, the idea was inconceivable to most.

Forests: setting aside reserves around the globe

The major causes of deforestation are the usually illegal clearcutting of forests, slash and burn land clearance, and the conversion of forest to arable land for cultivating animal feed or for paper production. This affects us all because forests play a central role in regulating the Earth’s climate. Greenpeace works actively against logging around the globe. Many forested areas are under protection today or indeed still standing because Greenpeace has repeatedly engaged in protest, providing information and negotiating with those concerned, often with the support of Greenpeace Germany. Here are some success stories.

Finland and Russia

Northern boreal forests make up the largest forest ecosystem on Earth. Greenpeace and the Sámi, indigenous inhabitants of northern Finland, have been committed to conserving this last remaining natural paradise since 2000. Greenpeace activists held out in tough confrontations with Finland’s wood industry, protesting against logging in the Baltic region for paper production in 2007, together with the European Renewable Energy Council, and the next vital move toward a future with safe and clean energy, following Germany’s 2011 decision to phase out nuclear power, will be the phase-out of coal. Greenpeace is committed to an ambitious exit plan and often works in a broad alliance, as here in Hambach in the autumn of 2018.

Greenpeace activists in Russia campaigned to have the old-growth Kalevalsky Forest designated a national park and met with success in 2006. They had protested on site to protect the forest, and actions in German ports had targeted freighters loaded with old-growth Russian timber. Greenpeace campaigned for more than 10 years to protect the Kalevalsky Forest.

Canada
British Columbia’s Great Bear Rainforest covers 6.4 million hectares, making it the largest coastal temperate rainforest on Earth. Greenpeace campaigned with the Nuxalk First Nation from 1997 for its conservation. The Canadian government placed 2.1 million hectares under permanent protection in 2009, and another 700,000 hectares were closed to mining and logging. After continued negotiations, a final agreement was reached in 2016 that conserved 85 percent of the Great Bear Rainforest’s forested area, protecting it from clearcutting.

Indonesia
Rainforests in Southeast Asia are logged primarily to clear land for oil palm plantations. Clearing forests that often stand on peat soil several metres deep, where huge amounts of carbon are stored, has an especially disastrous effect on the climate. Animals like orangutans lose their habitats as forests disappear. Cheap oil from oil palm trees ends up in food, cosmetics and even in fuel.

Greenpeace’s forest protection campaign in 2010, “Nestle, Give the Orangutan a Break”, launched a process for rethinking the situation. Nestlé declared it would not source palm oil and paper from deforested areas in future, and Nestlé’s largest palm-oil producer and supplier, Golden Agri Resources, announced in 2011 that it would build on its sustainability commitments. Later, other Greenpeace campaigns helped put pressure on several companies – Ferrero, L’Oréal, Procter & Gamble, Unilever and the Indonesian company Asia Pulp and Paper – to commit to no longer manufacturing their products at the expense of rainforests. However, a 2018 Greenpeace analysis showed how much campaign work lay ahead for the organisation until pledges would become reality.

Brazil
The Amazon rainforest is one of the largest continuous forested areas on Earth and an important regulator of the planet’s climate. Greenpeace published detailed maps and background material in 2009 to show the enormous effect of meat consumption – beginning with cattle farming – on Brazil’s forests. In a global campaign, the organisation targeted Walmart, Adidas and Nike, major purchasers of meat and leather, with this information. Greenpeace volunteers stood in front of shops in Germany and explained their campaign to the public. In turn, the companies targeted put pressure on the right places, and it worked. The largest cattle-processing enterprises in Brazil came to an agreement with Greenpeace to stop buying cattle raised on land newly converted from rainforest to pasture.

The production of animal feed destroys forests too, and millions of hectares in Brazil had fallen victim to soy cultivation in recent decades. Soy is fed to pigs, cattle and chickens in Europe and even ends up as ‘biodiesel’ in vehicles. In 2006, Greenpeace saw through the signing by soy businesses of a two-year moratorium on trading soy from newly deforested areas. The moratorium was regularly extended in later years and became permanent in 2016. It was the outcome of many actions (in Germany too) and tough negotiations with Brazil’s national association of soy traders. The deforestation rate decreased between 2005 and 2012. It was especially the soy moratorium and the agreement on cattle sourcing that contributed to this positive development. Greenpeace Germany also contributed toward this end in the global campaign.

But much remains to be done. Deforestation has definitely increased in recent years. Environmental protection has lost its priority and existing regulations and laws have not been rigorously and effectively enforced. There is no reason to hope right now for a reversal of this negative trend. Quite the opposite – the new Brazilian government in place since 2019 is putting more and more pressure on forests and the people who live in them.

Water: hope for polluted rivers
Globalisation has meant that the production of goods once made in the global north has shifted to other regions of the world. This production relocates environmental pollution, especially when chemicals are discharged into local waters. Toxins long banned in Europe are released in effluent, posing a serious hazard to local populations. An estimated fifty percent of surface waters in China, for example, were already polluted by the early 2010s. Some 30 billion tonnes of partially untreated wastewater were being discharged into the Yangtze River every year – yet Shanghai’s 20 million inhabitants get their drinking water from its delta.

Greenpeace analysed samples of wastewater from the Youngor Textile Complex and Well Dyeing Factory Ltd factories in 2010 and 2011, revealing that both production sites were discharging hazardous and persistent chemicals into the Yangtze River. Carcinogenic substances or those with hormone-disrupting properties cannot be wholly extracted from wastewater, not even...
In 2012, Levi’s pledged to eliminate chemicals harmful to health and environment from its production by 2020 – Greenpeace actions directly in front of its shops may have helped the company make this decision.

Greenpeace took action to protect sustainable fishery. Activists targeted a Russian fish trawler about 20 kilometres off the coast of Senegal in 2012 to protest against overfishing. After the Senegalese government quickly revoked 29 fishery licenses for foreign vessels, the local fish supply increased.

in such modern treatment plants as those operated by the Youngor factory. Both factories were manufacturing for Adidas, Calvin Klein, Converse, H&M, Lacoste, Nike and Puma. Greenpeace’s research culminated in its 2011 Dirty Laundry report and launched the longterm Detox campaign for the clean production of clothing. The issue is also relevant in Germany. Importing textiles means that washing clothes rinses out toxin chemicals from their production by 2020. By the end of 2018, the campaign had pressured altogether 80 textile brands and important suppliers to pledge they would switch to toxin-free production. But Greenpeace was not always satisfied with the actual progress being made in cleaning up production, and kept exerting pressure over the years – with success – on Adidas, for example. The campaign was also successful at the political level. China’s 2013 Five-Year Plan included a more stringent monitoring of pollutants in textile production. The issue is also relevant in Germany. Importing textiles means that washing clothes rinses out toxin chemicals from their production. The testing of textiles in German, Austrian and Swiss supermarkets and discount shops in 2014 revealed that children’s shoes in particular were polluted with hazardous chemicals. Greenpeace has kept consumers informed since then with its shopping guides, they are regularly updated and provide orientation and an overview of which textile labels really guarantee sustainable production.

Greenpeace’s Detox campaign brought about far-reaching change in the clothing industry, admitted even by the industry and trade associations.

Fishery: protecting stocks from overfishing
Fishing grounds off West African coasts provide an important livelihood for local small-scale fishers and are the only source of protein-rich food. But over the years huge industrial trawlers have appeared here more and more frequently to catch and process fish. Some are there legally and even subsidised by the EU – as European waters are already overfished. These trawlers can be up to 140 meters long and are technically well equipped. In 2011, Greenpeace Germany supported the Greenpeace office in Dakar, Senegal, with advice on campaign development. In 2012, the work at sea began with a tour along the west coast of Africa with the Arctic Sunrise to campaign for sustainable fishery. Actions off Mauritania and Senegal and many talks with politicians had their effect. Shortly before he was elected president of Senegal, Macky Sall said: “We are aware of the difficult situation for our fishers [...] and we have talked to Greenpeace [...] about the problem [...] we will take urgent action to address the issue.” A few weeks later, after Sall became president, the government cancelled 29 licenses for foreign fishing vessels which gave an enormous boost to the catches of local small fishing operations.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, around 60 percent of global edible fish stocks are now being caught to their limits and about 33 percent are already overfished or depleted, which means more fish are caught than their stocks can replenish. Consumers can here take responsibility for preserving the natural life support base and contributing to protecting the seas – in the way they shop for food. Since 2008, Greenpeace has published a Shopping Guide for Fish, which is frequently updated and tells consumers how to buy fish in a sustainable manner.
Greenpeace activists have always carried out courageous and non-violent actions for the environment. But the organisation also goes other ways to ensure the protection of our life support base. It uses the possibilities inherent in the rule of law to stop things like highly questionable patents on life. Greenpeace thereby sees to landmark decisions that are relevant to all of society.

No patents on stem cells: victory at the European Court of Justice
The German Patent Office granted a patent on human stem cells for the first time in 1999 to applicant Oliver Brüstle, a neurobiologist in Bonn. Greenpeace filed a legal action against the patent at the German Federal Patent Court in 2004. “Respect for human life as such calls for clear limits in patent law”, said Frank Ulrich Montgomery, at that time chairman of the Marburger Bund doctors’ association, at a joint press conference with Greenpeace. “The destruction of human embryos for commercial purposes violates society’s ethical values.”

The court severely limited the patent in 2006, and in 2008 the European Patent Office made a landmark decision that human embryonic stem cells could not be patented. Brüstle appealed to Germany’s Federal Court of Justice, which submitted the case to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). In 2011, the highest judges in Europe decided that if human embryos were destroyed to produce stem cells, then related patents could not be granted.43 The ECJ essentially agreed with Greenpeace’s argumentation and defined in detail, for the first time, how human embryos were to be protected from argumentation and defined in detail, for the first time, how human embryos were to be protected from commercial exploitation through patents.

The public showed great interest in this court decision and press comments were positive. The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung Online said: “The European Court of Justice (...) has set a benchmark in European legal history. The honour of having achieved this goes to the environmental organisation Greenpeace.”44 The Schwäbische Zeitung expressed the opinion that: “Significantly, it was not a church, let alone the CDU party that took legal action against the patenting of embryonic stem cells; no, it was the environmental activists from Greenpeace. They obviously realised more clearly than many politicians that humans are part of nature and therefore worthy of protection.”

No patents on plants and animals: the Bundestag agrees
The European Patent Office had already granted numerous patents on living organisms – ranging from tomatoes with lowered water content, and a wheat variety with reduced sprouting, to genetically modified fish. Greenpeace campaigned against this practice from 1997, often together with church associations, farmers, and other groups. Greenpeace’s work repeatedly met with success. One instance concerned a patent on pig breeding when the international agribusiness Monsanto registered a patent on pigs with a certain gene in 2004. Greenpeace and other organisations lodged an appeal, and at a rally in Munich in 2009, Bavaria’s then environment minister, Markus Söder, also spoke out against the patent.45 The European Patent Office revoked it in April 2010.46

Monsanto filed a patent in 2009 at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva on ham and cutlets from pigs fed with Monsanto’s genetically modified plants. After Greenpeace drew public attention to this, criticism was expressed internationally and Monsanto seemed to lose interest in it. In Europe the claim is considered withdrawn.47 Greenpeace has also taken action not only against individual cases but also to achieve general bans. Greenpeace and some 300 environmental and agricultural organisations made an international appeal in 2007 to ban the patenting of plants.48 This call was effective. In Germany, all political parties in the Bundestag spoke out against patents on plants and animals.49 The German Bundestag and the European Parliament both called for a halt to such patents, at least on conventional varieties or breeds, in 2012.50

The Bundestag adopted a change in German patent law in 2013 which meant that plants and animals cultivated or bred conventionally could no longer be patented.50 The German government’s 2018 coalition agreement states: “We reject patents on plants and animals.”

Genetic modification: food is labelled thanks to Greenpeace
People in Germany largely reject genetic modification (GM) in agriculture. Germany’s national survey (Naturbewusstsein 2017) of the population’s awareness of nature showed that 79 percent of the population agreed genetic engineering should be prohibited in agriculture; and 78 percent endorsed the statement that humans did not have the right to modify the genetic structure of plants and animals. A full 93 percent wanted to see food products from animals fed with GM feed labelled accordingly.51

Greenpeace ran major national and international campaigns from 1996 against genetic modification and for transparency in labelling, as desired by consumers. Today it must be specified if GM plants have been used directly in any food products.52 But it is not obligatory to label eggs, meat or milk products if their source animals have been fed with GM plants. Nevertheless a large share of GM plants cultivated worldwide end up in animal feed. Consumers had few choices among conventionally produced foods until Greenpeace closed this gap in information and gave customers options. In 2004, the Greenpeace Shopping Guide to Non-GM Food began looking behind the scenes.

A ‘green list’ named those companies that did not use GM maize or GM soy to feed animals or that were making good progress in changing their supply lines. Conversely, those companies that refused to change their feed supply or felt unable to do so were also identified. The shopping guide reached a total distribution of 3.5 million. In the meantime, the entire dairy product industry now works almost entirely ‘without GM’ and labels its products accordingly, and there is currently some movement in the meat market toward transparency – a development where Greenpeace has played a major role.

Greenpeace also did successful work on farms. The organisation campaigned for years against the cultivation of MON810 maize, a GM plant that produces an insecticide. Greenpeace activists repeatedly protested directly on fields – the insecticide kills pests but also beneficial insects. Ilse Aigner, who was then Germany’s minister for consumer protection, food and agriculture, announced a ban on growing MON810 in Germany in 2009. She explained that “there are reasonable grounds to believe that the MON810 variety of genetically modified maize is a threat to the environment.”

Greenpeace und Misereor jointly lodged an appeal in 2001 against a patent on traditional maize varieties granted to DuPont. They criticised the company’s “bio piracy” – the patent was revoked.
The right to information: Greenpeace makes things transparent

With its own legislative proposals, model proceedings and public relations work, Greenpeace has for years taken action to strengthen the right of citizens to get information from public authorities. The organisation was already calling for an environmental information law in the 1980s, and Germany adopted such a law in 1994 based on an EU regulation. The organisation was also early to work for a comprehensive consumer information law giving all citizens access to data on food monitoring. Greenpeace put forward a draft law as early as 2001, but seven years went by before the law was adopted in the Bundestag – albeit with weaknesses.

Finally, in the course of the national dioxin scare in 2000, the consumer information law was substantially reformed. This legislation often develops out of model proceedings. Greenpeace was involved in 2009 in legal proceedings that went all the way up to Germany’s Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig. The organisation wanted to find out – on the basis of the Environmental Information Act – which companies were the main beneficiaries of agricultural export subsidies. These controversial subsidies have a reputation for benefiting mostly large farming enterprises. They often destroy local markets in Africa and Latin America. The highest court ruled that Greenpeace was right and ordered that relevant data must be published. Greenpeace discovered that some companies benefitting from agricultural export subsidies were not at all active in the agriculture sector. The power utility RWE, for example, was receiving agricultural subsidies to recultivate areas denuded by lignite surface mining. Lufthansa was taking funding for catering on board flights that went beyond the EU’s external borders.

Greenpeace's incentive for pursuing information rights legislation often develops out of model proceedings. Greenpeace was involved in 2009 in legal proceedings that went all the way up to Germany’s Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig. The organisation wanted to find out – on the basis of the Environmental Information Act – which companies were the main beneficiaries of agricultural export subsidies. These controversial subsidies have a reputation for benefiting mostly large farming enterprises. They often destroy local markets in Africa and Latin America. The highest court ruled that Greenpeace was right and ordered that relevant data must be published. Greenpeace discovered that some companies benefitting from agricultural export subsidies were not at all active in the agriculture sector. The power utility RWE, for example, was receiving agricultural subsidies to recultivate areas denuded by lignite surface mining. Lufthansa was taking funding for catering on board flights that went beyond the EU’s external borders.

Greenpeace's exclusive research garnered media attention and led to enquiries in the European Parliament. The EU then amended agricultural subsidy regulations so that direct payments could be made only to active farming enterprises.77

This kind of research has also helped prevent corruption. A few days after Greenpeace published figures on the major recipients of agrarian export subsidies, investigators in Hamburg’s harbour launched a major raid in which customs investigators, police and public prosecutors searched the offices of a company suspected to have fraudulently acquired sugar subsidies in a big way – amounting to 370 million euros, said the public prosecutor's office. Even the New York Times reported on the case.77

Greenpeace's activities to gain rights to information are broadly diversified. Greenpeace of course makes use of these rights. But it is thanks to model proceedings that certain basic issues have been resolved, benefitting other claimants as well, whether citizens or smaller organisations. Greenpeace's own legislative proposals have contributed to further developing the law – and legal experts acknowledge this. Peter Schaar, then the federal commissioner for data protection and freedom of information, invited Redelfs in 2011 to speak at the event celebrating the fifth anniversary of Germany's Freedom of Information Act. In his 2012 report on the event, Schaar expressed his appreciation of Greenpeace's continuous effort to improve transparency. "Dr Manfred Redelfs (Greenpeace/research network) gave the keynote speech. The commitment of Greenpeace and other NGOs contributed importantly to enabling the Freedom of Information Act to move through the Bundestag and the Bundesrat in 2005. The present draft for a Citizen Information Act proposed by a number of NGOs combines the acts on consumer information, environmental information and freedom of information into one single federal law. Germany's environment ministry also acknowledged that Greenpeace had significantly contributed to further developing the law. In the spring of 2017, the ministry appointed the director of Greenpeace's research network to its academic advisory board for evaluating the Environmental Information Act."

Dr. Manfred Redelfs
Director of research at Greenpeace

Greenpeace activists in Brandenburg posted signs in 2005 to identify a field of genetically modified MON810 maize. Developed by American agribusiness Monsanto, this maize variety produces a pesticide toxin that also kills beneficial insects – it was banned in Germany in 2009.

Industrial agriculture or smallholder farming – which should be supported by EU funding? Greenpeace campaigned successfully to have subsidy payments made public.
Greenpeace gives fresh impetus to technology, science and education

Environmentalists at Greenpeace are always looking for solutions, generating new knowledge, developing detailed scenarios for possible ways into the future, and even designing new products. This can be seen in campaigns for renewable energies, the Greenfreeze refrigerator without CFC/HFC coolants, the fuel-saving SmiLE car, and in research expeditions to our planet’s polar regions.

Natural and climate-friendly cooling: the Greenfreeze fridge

It was already apparent in the 1980s that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), used as refrigerants and solvents, were destroying the Earth’s ozone layer. The 1987 Montreal Protocol banned some of these aggressive substances around the world, but not all of them. The chemical industry then introduced the fluorinated hydrocarbons (HFCs) as substitutes, making things worse. These no longer destroy the ozone layer but are potent greenhouse gases.

In 1989, Greenpeace launched a campaign to ban CFCs and HFCs. At the same time, the environmental organisation began working successfully on developing the first refrigerator without CFC/HFC coolants: the Greenfreeze. In March 1993, the first one came off the line at the Foron company in Saxony – and the German environment ministry conferred it the Environment Blue Angel award. Despite facing resistance from nearly the entire industry, the Greenfreeze’s environmentally sound cooling technology made the breakthrough within a few years.

Since then, more than 900 million refrigerators using Greenfreeze technology have been mass produced around the world.80 Scientists and refrigerator manufacturers have been positive about the Greenfreeze and explicitly acknowledged Greenpeace’s role.81

Cool in the sun: the SolarChill unit

In places where poverty, illness and malnutrition affect the lives of many people, there is often one thing in abundance: sunshine. Greenpeace designed the SolarChill – a solar-powered, environmentally friendly vaccine cooling unit that works without CFC/HFC coolants, is not connected to the grid and runs without storage batteries.82 Wherever power is insufficient, this unit can keep medications cool. After comprehensive practice tests, one of the first units was purchased for the estate clinic of India’s president,83 and in 2010 it was certified by the World Health Organization.84 The Danish company Vestfrost began serial production of the SolarChill, and companies in emerging economies have also adopted this technology.85

Reducing fuel consumption by half: the SmiLE car

Greenpeace began searching in 1993 for a new idea to make fuel-saving vehicles. The outcome was the SmiLE (small, intelligent, light, efficient) car – a redesigned Renault Twingo with a small opposing cylinder engine (only two cylinders) that a ‘comprex’ supercharger boosted to 55 horsepower. The environmentalists proved that standard vehicles could be built to consume only half the fuel – without a loss in performance, comfort or safety. By downsizing and supercharging its engine (reducing cubic capacity while boosting air compression), the SmiLE ran efficiently in almost all operating modes, making it very economical.86 Greenpeace took its idea to the road in a long test drive in 1996, comparing it to a conventional Twingo, a Ford Escort and a VW Polo. It won hands down – with a standard fuel consumption of 3.2 litres per hundred kilometres, a sensation at the time. In practice, its average consumption was actually much lower.

The SmiLE principle made the breakthrough in technology. But the goal of drastically lowering CO2 emissions by reducing fuel consumption has not been reached. Instead of using Greenpeace’s technology to cut fuel consumption in half with no loss in performance, a VW Golf model, for example, doubled performance with the same fuel consumption. That’s why Greenpeace continues to work on encouraging car manufacturers to rethink their production.

On SmiLE’s twentieth anniversary in 2015, the revolutionary fuel-saving car was donated to the Verkehrszentrum [transport museum] in Munich’s Deutsches Museum.87

New findings in the Arctic and Antarctic: research expeditions

Greenpeace wants to protect the Arctic and Antarctic. Implementing effective protective measures must be based on reliable research in these regions, and Greenpeace has made it possible to gather such information. Between 2005 and 2012, researchers accompanied several Greenpeace expeditions to the Arctic. They tracked the movement of glaciers with GPS transmitters, and they measured water temperatures, currents and salt content at various depths in fjords. In a 2018 Greenpeace expedition to the Antarctic’s Weddell Sea, manned submarines ventured hundreds of metres below the surface to investigate the seafloor. The data collected were the basis for the formal registration of four separate Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) recommended by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).88

Environmental education for young people: the sustainability barometer

Greenpeace published its Sustainability Barometer – What Motivates Young People? in 2012 and 2016, based on a survey developed and carried out by Leuphana University Lüneburg.89 The barometer took stock of young Germans’ awareness of sustainability – the surveyed age group [15 to 24 years old] will be tomorrow’s decision-makers. Following the first sustainability barometer published in 2012, Greenpeace strengthened its educational work and developed free material90 for teachers to use in lessons on environmental topics. Greenpeace has often supported schools in organising projects and actions for a more climate-friendly world, encouraging students to participate in activities at the UN climate conference in Bonn in 2017, for example.91 The education of those who want to prevent environmental crimes should begin early. Teaching and learning about sustainable development must be firmly anchored in the education system – and Greenpeace is not alone in finding this desirable.92 Experts at a hearing in 2016 of the Bundestag’s parliamentary advisory committee for sustainable development expressed the same concern very clearly.93

In 2014, Greenpeace set up the Bündnis Zukunftbildung [an alliance for educating young people about the future], an initiative of German NGOs active in youth work, environment, nature protection, development and human rights.94 It is committed to anchoring and politically implementing the UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development.95 In March 2015, the Bundestag adopted a resolution called “Education for Sustainable Development – Into the Future with the Global Action Programme”, which took up many of the NGO alliance’s demands.96 Greenpeace has represented the alliance since 2015 in the Ministry of Education and Research’s national platform for education on sustainable development.97
Greenpeace gives a helping hand when environmental disasters occur

Environmental disasters have immediate and direct impact, making a rapid response essential. Time and again, Greenpeace has quickly arrived on the scene of a disaster to document damage or identify hazards – or even just to help. Here are some examples.

Fukushima: independent measuring of radioactivity levels

When three reactors melted down in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan in March 2011, Greenpeace’s independent monitoring made valuable information available to the population. Greenpeace’s nuclear expert, Heinz Smital (right), measured levels of radioactivity at a playground in Fukushima City in 2011. Greenpeace’s independent readings of radioactivity to assess the area’s inhabitants with information. Within a few days, the organisation’s radiation experts were there and began measuring levels of radioactivity. They were supported around the clock by a dedicated team in Germany that assessed weather data and developments in the reactors’ ruins. Ever since those early days, the organisation’s radiation experts have worked in the region taking countless readings to assess the contamination of ecosystems.

Greenpeacers were among the first to visit the highly contaminated village of Iitate, about 40 kilometres from Fukushima. Greenpeace recognised the danger to its inhabitants and called for their immediate evacuation. Pushing forward relocation efforts as levels of radioactivity showed the need to expand the Fukushima evacuation zone, Greenpeace countered – and is still countering – attempts by the facility’s operators and the Japanese government to minimise the situation.

The government’s reaction to the nuclear disaster, whether directly after the triple meltdown or in following years, has led to human rights violations. Women and children in particular still suffer today. Added to that is the real radiological threat. Extensive monitoring by Greenpeace shows that contamination is still very high in many places where people are expected to return to their homes. Resettlement poses a risk to health and is unacceptable. Greenpeace has helped ensure that the UN Human Rights Council addresses this issue. The Japanese government’s policy of returning evacuees has been internationally criticized.

Greenpeace continues its work in Japan locally in the Fukushima area and nationally at the political level. It is strongly supported by the Greenpeace office in Germany.

Russia: volunteers take action against forest fires

Russia has to deal with severe forest fires every year. A fire raged near Moscow for weeks in 2010 and countless square kilometres of forest and fields went up in flames. Villages burned to the ground and people lost their homes.

The government does not provide much support to inhabitants in such cases. So Greenpeace Russia has decided to take action itself. During summer months, forest experts and activists in the environmental organisation patrolled areas at risk. They measure soil moisture and issue forest fires warnings.

For a long time, Greenpeace was the country’s only independent source of information. To enable an early reaction – if possible before fires even start – Greenpeace trained volunteers in firefighting and in some areas guaranteed constant operational readiness. Greenpeace from Germany also attended training camps held in 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2017.

The Mountain Forest Project: more than a million trees planted

Forest dieback was a major environmental issue in the 1980s. In response, Greenpeace founded the Mountain Forest Project in 1986, offering volunteers the opportunity to work at a practical level to preserve forest ecosystems. The first assignment was in March 1987 near Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany. Intact forests protect villages from landslides and prevent avalanches.

Taking action before it’s too late – volunteers in the Mountain Forest Project planted young trees in the restoration area of a protected forest.

Greenpeace Environmental Foundation and Greenpeace Germany today organise the work stays, and both the Mountain Forest Project non-profit association in Switzerland and the Greenpeace office in Germany financially support the project.

The Mountain Forest Project continues to grow and has won several awards.

The Mountain Forest Project: non-profit association in Switzerland – the municipality was facing the danger of landslides – and volunteers stabilised slopes by planting young trees. Since then, thousands of volunteers working in several European countries have planted more than a million trees, worked through hundreds of hectares of forest, restored many kilometres of wild streams to their natural state, and re-wetted dozens of high moorlands. The Mountain Forest Project continues to grow and has won several awards.

The Mountain Forest Project non-profit association in Germany today organises the work stays, and both the Greenpeace Environmental Foundation and Greenpeace Energy financially support the project.
Greenpeace changes the food market

Today it’s no longer enough just to protest loudly and draw public attention to problems. The correlations between ecology, economy and consumption are so complex that ideas for solutions have forced customers and food companies to revise their thinking. Greenpeace provides information and assistance – and applies pressure.

Fish products: supermarkets do some rethinking

The food industry, as well as politicians and consumers, should make sure there will still be edible fish in the sea in the future. Greenpeace Germany began in 2007 to look into the sourcing of fish and seafood products in large grocery chains – and wanted better information. At the time, none of the 11 grocery chains and discount supermarkets investigated had adopted any guidelines for sourcing fish. Greenpeace’s persistent work was successful, and by the time its fifth supermarket ranking appeared in 2011, all of the food companies investigated had set policies in writing. The implementation of these sourcing guidelines took shape in following years, and by 2014 Greenpeace was observing these guidelines being applied in 17 different grocery and discount supermarket chains across Germany. This work sensitised and changed the market, giving consumers the information they needed to make deliberate choices to support sustainable consumption.

Cultivation methods: the Almería region takes a new course

Greenpeace had repeatedly drawn attention since 2003 to toxins in food, calling on the retail food business, agriculture and politicians to install measures for reducing pesticide pollution. An important starting point for campaign work was consumer power. Greenpeace published its Shopping Guide: Food without Pesticides in 2005 for the first time; it was frequently updated and supplemented in years to follow. It provided information on the pollution of fruits and vegetables with pesticides – and set a new course. Sales slumped in food shops and German supermarkets began their own pesticide-reducing programmes, ever less willing to accept toxins on their fruits and vegetables. The demand for organic products grew. Food producers in the Almería region in Spain came heavily under pressure – and responded. Producers took a first step toward more environmentally friendly cultivation methods by using beneficial insects, for example. In 2008, Almería was awarded a prize to Greenpeace in recognition of its work.109

Pesticides sprayed on vegetables in Spain – a campaign by Greenpeace Germany made cultivators in the Almería region rethink their production methods.

Greenteams and other children demonstrated at the COP23 in Bonn in 2017. As Kids for Earth, they called on world-leaders to comply with the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and take action on the climate crisis.

Volunteers serve public interests

The commitment of volunteers in Germany contributes significantly to the common good and has been praised by the government. The work of Greenpeace activists was cited as exemplary in a 2001 brochure titled Voluntary and Civic Engagement in Our Society, which was published by the ministry for family affairs, senior citizens, women and youth.111 Since 2012, Greenpeace volunteers have been regularly invited to the Bürgerfest event sponsored by Germany’s president. This occasion is dedicated to expressing gratitude to volunteers in Germany who have devoted their time and energy to the community. Joachim Gauck, federal president at the time, wrote in his welcome address in 2012: “Civic spirit of this kind is not reimbursed in euros, but it lives from the most precious currency of our times: genuine responsibility.”110 In 2017, the highest award for outstanding community work in Germany – the Medal of Merit of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany – was given to a Greenpeace volunteer for her work during the previous two decades.112

Greenteams: good minds for the environment

Greenteams are young environmentalist groups, their members aged between 10 and 14, sometimes younger, who take the initiative to organise actions themselves. Greenpeace Germany supports Greenteams with materials and ideas. It also offers lots of information and tips for actions on a children’s website, which gives children a protected space where they can report on their activities.113 Greenteams organise rubbish-collecting actions, information tables and display stands, and they also paint posters and collect signatures on petitions. They accomplish a lot! See some examples on the next two pages.
Adelsheim / Wemmershof
In 2014, the ‘Green Butterflies’ Greenteam were very annoyed to see litter scattered around a nature reserve located between Wemmershof and Adelsheim (in southern Germany) and started a rubbish-collecting action – by the end they had filled five sacks with waste. A similar Greenteam action was described as an example of social commitment in a school textbook on government and economics.114

Berlin
Greenteams were invited to contribute to an exhibition, “In the Jungle”, while it was being organised by the Deutsche Kinemathek film and television museum in Berlin. Youngsters produced a talk show, “Jungle Protection Is Climate Protection – Greenteams Make Discoveries”, and also developed a science quiz for the Kinderakademie.115

Nationwide
The Greenpeace office in Germany frequently offers opportunities to join national campaigns that work on various environmental issues. In 2011, the Kids for Oceans group took action and called on EU politicians to designate more marine reserves in Europe to solve the problem of overfishing. Young environmentalists put to sea with a Greenpeace campaigner on the Beluga II and discovered the treasures of the underwater world in the Baltic Sea lagoon off Western Pomerania. For years, the climate crisis has topped the agenda for children and teenagers worried about the environment. Hundreds of young people went to Bonn to demonstrate at the 2017 UN climate conference, calling for much stronger measures to protect the climate. They brought along their own ‘climate agreement rulebook’, How to Save the Climate. An international delegation of young environmentalists handed the book over to Patricia Espinosa, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

International
Sometimes the little ones make a big appearance for Greenpeace. Paul Ludemann from Ganderkesee-Stenum near Bremen was 13 when he travelled with 500 other children and young people in 2008 to the UN biodiversity conference in Bonn to campaign for better forest and climate protection. Dressed up as trees, butterflies and jungle animals, the Kids for Earth handed over 115,000 signatures on petitions to Sigmar Gabriel, Germany’s then environment minister. Young Paul addressed thousands of delegates at the conference’s opening.

Greenpeace youth groups: full of energy for our Earth
Anyone who says today’s young people don’t care must be kidding. Greenpeace’s youth groups, its members aged between 14 and 19, are full of energy and ideas for actively shaping their future and the future of the Earth. In about 50 towns and cities in Germany, they organise demonstrations, give presentations at schools and distribute information to the public from display tables. Their unconventional and creative actions repeatedly draw attention to pressing environmental problems – and initiate changes.

Clubs and associations offer children and young people a way to get involved in societal issues. Greenpeace makes an important and valuable contribution here – and the Bertelsmann Stiftung foundation, in a 2014 publication, praised the organisation’s inspiring management of volunteer youth groups.

Hamburg
The 34th Protestant Church Congress was held in Hamburg in May 2013. Greenpeace’s youth groups organised an information table and 120 young people from across Germany took turns during the event to collect signatures on petitions calling for a marine sanctuary to be designated in the Arctic. Lastly, they formed a ‘human banner’ on one of the Alster lakes – as part of a worldwide Greenpeace action.

Berlin
Some 150 young Greenpeace volunteers jumped into Berlin’s Spree River early in the summer of 2018 to say ‘Don’t Drown Our Future’, campaigning against the German government’s failed policy on climate change, and pushing for the phase-out of coal fuel. “We want to send a signal for climate protection, and remind the chancellor and members of the future Coal Commission to take responsibility for us young people”, said Jona-than Kurz, who was 19 at the time.

Nationwide
In 2011, young Greenpeace activists climbed to the top of the Zugspitze, Germany’s highest mountain, and raised a banner saying “Germany is renewable”. On the same day, some 150 young Greenpeaceers held up banners with the same words while standing on each of the highest elevations in Germany’s 16 states. These ascents were an appeal to state premiers to completely shut down the country’s nuclear power plants by 2015 and work toward a comprehensive energy transition.

As Kids for Earth, Greenteam representatives took action at the 2017 climate conference in Bonn. They gave a ‘rulebook’ on how to save the climate to Patricia Espinosa, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Greenpeace’s expert on oceans, Thilo Maack, talked to children in the Kids for Oceans group. On board the Beluga II in 2011, they looked at a map of the Western Pomerania Lagoon Area National Park.

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Nationwide Greenpeace has campaigned for years for a change of course in agriculture. One milestone in this journey has been to create transparency for consumers – especially on how farm animals are kept. Only full transparency can help consumers decide which products to buy. Surveys have revealed that most customers do not want to buy meat products from animals that have needlessly suffered. This is where the work began for Greenpeace volunteers. For months they repeatedly protested at a range of grocery shops, distributing information to customers. Their actions were very effective. Lidl was the first to make changes in 2018 and was soon followed by the other major German food retailers – the last was Edeka in 2019. All retail chains committed to labelling their meat products according to how animals were kept, grading them from factory farming to organic husbandry.

International Members of Greenpeace groups walked 2,000 kilometres in 2009 – from Constance in southern Germany to the UN climate conference in Copenhagen – insisting that “Something Must Go Forward in Copenhagen”. Along the way they met with many mayors and members of the Bundestag, calling on them to improve efforts to protect the climate. Support was provided by the parliamentary groups of the SPD, Die Linke and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen parties and individual MPs in the CDU/CSU parties. Chancellor Angela Merkel thanked them expressly for their volunteer commitment to save the climate.

Team50plus: using life experience to protect the environment Environmentalists aged over 50 are involved in Team50plus in about 20 towns and cities in Germany. They work closely together with local Greenpeace groups, are highly motivated, creative and stubborn. They organise their own actions, distribute information at events, encourage people to change their thinking on environmental issues, give presentations in schools and offer advice and tips for practical everyday life.

Hamburg Inspired by thoughts about the common good, Greenpeace decided to support the Economy for the Common Good economic model and be assessed and evaluated; it was the first major non-governmental organisation in Germany to do so. Greenpeace Germany published the balance sheet on its contributions to the common good efforts to protect the climate. Support was provided by the parliamentary groups of the SPD, Die Linke and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen parties and individual MPs in the CDU/CSU parties. Chancellor Angela Merkel thanked them expressly for their volunteer commitment to save the climate.
Greenpeace campaigns have successfully protected the environment

Greenpeace works around the world on the most urgent environmental problems, and our campaigns are networked across national borders. A problem such as water pollution caused by the textile industry in China may be more effectively approached if it is tackled both where it happens and where those textiles end up – in the German clothing market, for instance. Greenpeace Germany and its activists therefore support many international campaigns. Here is a selection of campaign success stories where Greenpeace Germany made a vital contribution.

1968
Whales are protected and whale sanctuaries monitored
A major success in Greenpeace campaign work was the International Whaling Commission’s decision in 1982 to adopt a moratorium on commercial whaling, going into effect in 1986. But work to protect whales has to be repeated every year because the agreement has legal loopholes exploited by Japan, Norway and Iceland. Greenpeace did lobby work at the same time activists on ships – Germans among them – monitored the Southern Ocean whale sanctuary during several Antarctic summers. They repeatedly steered inflatables into the firing line of whalers’ harpoons to protect the animals.

1983
Dumping nuclear waste on the high seas is stopped
Greenpeace activists on the Rainbow Warrior in 1978 launched their first actions against the ocean dumping of nuclear waste. Greenpeace targeted dumping vessels summer after summer – and its obstinacy paid off. In February 1983, signatories of the London Dumping Convention agreed to a ten-year moratorium on the dumping of nuclear waste at sea, in 1993, this became a permanent ban on such disposal anywhere at sea.

1986
More than a million trees are planted
Greenpeace co-founded the Mountain Forest Project in 1986, for which volunteers at many sites in Germany and Europe do practical work to protect and maintain forest ecosystems. To date, volunteers have planted more than a million trees, worked through hundreds of hectares of forest, renaturalised many kilometres of wild streams, and re-wetted dozens of high moorlands.

1988
Whales are protected and whale sanctuaries monitored
During the 1970s, it was common practice for chemical companies to dispose of their highly toxic waste at sea. In 1980, Greenpeace began a campaign to end the dumping of dilute acid into the North Sea; this encompassed actions at ports and on the high seas. The campaign met with success and the dumping of dilute acid was phased out by the end of 1989.

1991
Dumping dilute acid at sea is discontinued

2013
Greenpeace volunteers across all generations get involved and ‘close to people’. Members of the Team50plus group have distributed information to visitors at the Ozeaneum museum in Stralsund to tell them about Greenpeace’s work (left), and have collected signatures against new lignite surface mining in Brandenburg (above).

at the end of 2017. A dialogue had already begun and been actively pursued and shaped by the Team50plus group in Hamburg in 2015 when other volunteers, donors, and people outside of Greenpeace joined several workshops to explore how economic activity could serve the common good to create a better life for all.

Stralsund / Tönning / Hamburg
Team50plus members have distributed information on the oceans and Greenpeace’s campaign work on marine issues to visitors at the Ozeaneum museum in Stralsund since 2008 and at the Wadden Sea national park centre in Tönning since 2016. They collect signatures petitioning for a better EU policy on fishing, for example, and they organise action days (and action weeks) to promote campaigns. The “1:1 Giants of the Seas” permanent exhibition in the Ozeaneum was designed and realised together with the forest team in the local Greenpeace group to change this situation at Berlin’s three large universities. They put together documentation and sent it to each university president and the student union, and to environmental consultants in the Bundestag. These actions, and many talks with people in a decision-making capacity who were not public figures, were effective – Berlin’s student union announced that it would no longer sell drinks in paper cups from January 2019.

Moselle and Rhine
During the summer of 2014, members of Team50plus joined the Rhia H when it visited cities along the Rhine and Moselle rivers to provide information to people in Germany, France, Luxembourg and Switzerland on the risks posed by old nuclear reactors. Volunteers guided visitors through the on-board exhibition and collected 10,000 signatures on petitions against the particularly old reactors in the Fessenheim and Cattenom nuclear power plants (NPPs) near the German border. The petitions were handed over to the French ambassador in Berlin. Shortly afterwards, Chanceller Angela Merkel also took up the issue and said she would talk to Francois Hollande, then president of France, about the safety of the Cattenom NPP.

Berlin
Disposable cups at Berlin universities? Not if the local Team50plus has anything to say about it! Every year, nearly three billion disposable cups are used just once in Germany – a shameful way to deal with valuable wood, water, energy and mineral oil resources. During the summer of 2017, the Team50plus began working together with the forest team in the local Greenpeace group to change this situation at Berlin’s three large universities. They organised photo actions over several days under the slogan “Facing Throwaway Culture”. They put together documentation and sent it to each university president and the student union, and to environmental consultants in the Bundestag. These actions, and many talks with people in a decision-making capacity who were not public figures, were effective – Berlin’s student union announced that it would no longer sell drinks in paper cups from January 2019.

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1991 UN moratorium on drift net fishery
In 1989, Greenpeace began a campaign against drift net fishing, a destructive practice which captured and drowned whales, dolphins and other marine animals in mesh. The environmental organisation lobbied strongly against this and took direct action on the high seas. In 1989, the UN adopted a resolution to ban drift net fishing, and a moratorium followed in 1991. The United Nations adopted an agreement in 1995, which Greenpeace had helped formulate, that laid down the first international standards for sustainable fisheries. And in 1998, the EU agriculture and fisheries ministers also agreed to ban this devastating fishing method.

1992 Less chlorine
Starting in the late 1980s, Greenpeace drew public attention to the hazards of using chlorine bleach in paper production. In 1990, the organisation showed in a lab that kraft pulp could be bleached successfully without chlorine. Then in 1991, Greenpeace presented The Plagiarius to the public, its own plagiarised version of Der Spiegel, printed on gravenure paper with chlorine-free kraft pulp content. From then on, this paper successfully gained a share of the market.

1993 Fuel consumption reduced by half
Greenpeace developed a concept in 1993 for reducing the fuel consumption of mass-produced cars by half – with no loss in performance, comfort or safety: the SmiLE (Small, Intelligent, Light, Efficient). In August 1996, Greenpeace presented a modified Renault Twingo to the public that incorporated the SmiLE design – it easily won a driving test comparing it to similar conventional cars.

1994 No toxic waste exports to low-income countries
The international public was shocked in the mid-1980s to find out that industrial nations were exporting their toxic waste to low-income countries for disposal: Greenpeace found cases of companies involved in this practice – and demanded a ban. From late in 1988, Greenpeace organised ‘Return to Sender’ actions around the world that brought waste back. In 1994, parties to the Basel Convention adopted an unconditional ban on exports of toxic waste from wealthy industrial nations to the rest of the world. Exports of waste for recycling purposes have also been banned since 1997.

1995 More transparency for citizens
Greenpeace has been committed since the 1980s to improving the right of citizens to get information from public authorities. Germany adopted the Environmental Information Act in 1994, based on an EU regulation. This was followed in 2006 by the Freedom of Information Act and in 2008 by the Consumer Information Act. This was followed in 2006 by the Freedom of Information Act and in 2008 by the Consumer Information Act.

1996 Ban on groundwater contaminant diuron
In the mid-1990s, Greenpeace uncovered the fact that the Deutsche Bahn railway company regularly sprayed its tracks with diuron, a herbicide which contaminated groundwater. The Biologische Bundesanstalt (BBA) in Braunschweig, the federal institute responsible for approving such substances, decided in April 1996 that diuron could no longer be used. A weed killer. Eight pesticide manufacturers stopped producing diuron herbicides the same year. When the BBA proposed re-approving diuron in 2000, the plan failed due to Greenpeace protests.

1997 Oil platforms must be dismantled on land
Greenpeace activists occupied the Brent Spar oil platform in the North Sea on 30 April 1993, looking to defeat Shell’s plans to dispose of the end of life platform in the ocean. Shell had the activists forcibly removed, but Greenpeace kept returning and was able to mobilise Europe-wide protests. At issue was not only the Brent Spar but the oil industry’s general intention to dump old oil rigs into the ocean – some 400 other rigs were supposed to follow the Brent Spar to the bottom of the sea. But public pressure on Shell was so high that the multinational oil group announced it would dismantle the Brent Spar on land. The political breakthrough came in 1998 when the Northeast Atlantic littoral states adopted a resolution that in future no disused oil or gas platforms could be dumped at sea.

1998 in Germany: the SmiLE consumes only half the fuel used by a conventional Renault Twingo.

1999 In the North Sea: Greenpeace activists dispute the dumping of the Brent Spar.

2000 No more TBT in antifouling ship paints
Tributyltin (TBT) was an agent in ship paints used to prevent the growth of mussels, snails and algae on vessels. But TBT seeped out from paints – and polluted rivers and seas. From 1999, Greenpeace activists drew public attention to the problem with many actions in Germany’s North Sea and Baltic ports. The environmentalists found high concentrations of the toxin in sludge in these harbours, as well as in fish, Wadden Sea worms and seals. In 2001, member states of the International Maritime Organization adopted a global ban on TBT in antifouling paints.

2001 The phase-out of nuclear power – thanks to Greenpeace
Starting in the 1980s, Greenpeace protested vigorously against Germany’s reliance on nuclear power. Its campaigns significantly contributed to lowering the population’s acceptance of this form of energy. After the Fukushima triple reactor meltdown in 2011, Germany’s
concerned were entitled to demand an investigation of Germany’s energy transition – Greenpeace played a relevant role in this development.

2013 First national park in Baden-Württemberg
Baden-Württemberg’s parliament in Stuttgart voted late in 2013 to establish the Black Forest National Park, the first of its kind in the state. This marked a great success for the state’s environmental movement and Greenpeace regional volunteer groups, who became highly committed to the designation of this park in 2013.

2014 Legal judgment against an interim storage site for nuclear waste
The decommissioned Brunsbüttel nuclear power plant in Schleswig-Holstein was the first to lose its operating licence as an interim storage site for nuclear waste in Germany – the permit was permanently revoked by the Federal Administrative Court. This ruling upheld a legal action brought by a local citizen in 2014 who complained that the risk of a terrorist attack on the site had not been adequately addressed. Greenpeace supported the legal proceedings.

2014 Giving up profits
Greenpeace put pressure on big fisheries to leave Arctic fishing grounds undisturbed. A report showed that trawlers taking advantage of ice cover loss due to climate change were catching fish in very remote areas. In the course of the campaign to protect the Arctic, Greenpeace persuaded food companies like McDonald’s, Iglo, Tesco and Emsieron to make a voluntary commitment to protect this vulnerable ecosystem.

2015 First Dam project in the Amazon is stopped
Brazil’s environment agency announced that the huge São Luiz do Tapajós dam planned in the heart of the Amazon region would not be constructed. For several months, Greenpeace had helped the indigenous Munduruku protect their territories along the Tapajós River – its valley is one of the most biodiverse places on Earth. Activists from around the world were there to peacefully oppose construction of the dam. Some 1.2 million people signed Greenpeace’s online petition against the project.

2016 Plans to drill for oil in the Wadden Sea are thwarted
Oil company DEA’s plans to drill for oil in Schleswig-Holstein’s Wadden Sea came to an end. An expert opinion commissioned by Greenpeace showed that drilling would have been illegal. About 24,000 people joined Greenpeace’s campaign and wrote protest emails to Robert Habeck, Schleswig-Holstein’s environment minister, who in turn commissioned a second expert opinion. It came to the same conclusion that Greenpeace’s already had.

2016 Krill industry supports marine sanctuaries
At the CCAMLR Antarctic Commission conference, the krill industry association announced that krill fishery in large areas around the Antarctic Peninsula would stop – a success for Greenpeace’s campaign to protect the Antarctic. In addition to voluntarily making this commitment, fishery operations expressly called for designating a marine sanctuary in the Weddell Sea and for an entire network of sanctuaries. This carries weight – the companies involved account together for 85 percent of the total krill catch in the Antarctic.

2016 TTIP leaks
Greenpeace Netherlands published more than 200 pages of Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) documents – kept secret until then. Among them were 13 chapters that disclosed the negotiating position of the United States. It became clear that the free trade agreement threatened German and European standards for protecting the environment and consumers. For example, the precautionary principle anchored in European law was to be scrapped. Some parts of the energy transition would also have fallen victim to the TTIP. Greenpeace demanded that the roughly 500 million EU citizens affected by the agreement should participate in decision making. Publicising the TTIP documents sparked critical debates in Germany’s Bundestag over transparency in trade agreement negotiations.

2016 Hope for polluted rivers
Greenpeace began its Detox campaign in 2010, aiming for the clean production of textiles treated with vast amounts of chemicals during manufacturing. Many of these chemicals are hazardous substances which, even in small amounts, are harmful to environment and health. In the course of the campaign, 80 large clothing businesses pledged by the end of 2018 to make their supply chains transparent and ban all toxic chemicals from their production. The Detox campaign brought profound change to the clothing industry.
Greenpeace's Consultative, Liaison and Observer Status in International Organisations and Agreements – A Selection –

Consultative Status
United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Liaison Status
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Observer Status
EU Commission
EU Parliament
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
International Whaling Commission (IWC) (must be applied for regularly)
Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR)
Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer
Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
Barcelona Convention for the Protection of The Mediterranean Sea / UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) (must be applied for regularly)

No funding from governments or industry
Greenpeace is an international environmental organisation that campaigns in non-violent actions to protect Earth's life support base. Our goal is to prevent the destruction of the environment, change damaging patterns of behaviour and achieve solutions. Greenpeace is independent, above party lines, and does not accept funds from governments, political parties or industry. More than 600,000 private donors in Germany support Greenpeace financially and thereby ensure we can continue our daily work to protect the environment.