

Viewpoint: Why is Germany hiring a former Greenpeace activist who reflexively opposed nuclear energy and genetic engineering as a climate advisor?

F ebruary 9, a headline caused a stir: Annalena Baerbock now employs Jennifer Morgan, the former head of Greenpeace, as special representative for international climate policy.

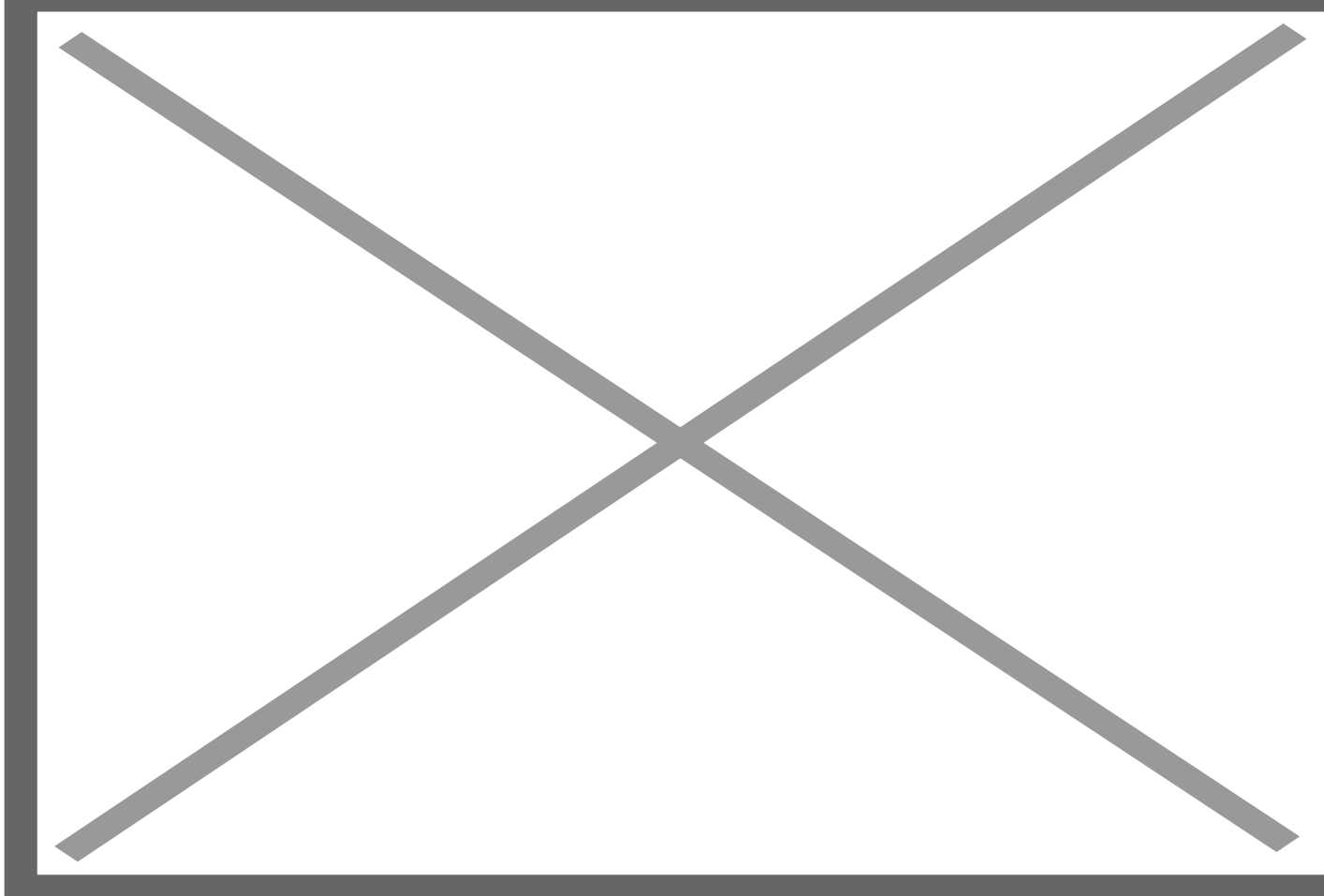
An open lobbyist in the federal government? “How can that be?” wondered many commentators on social networks.

The Federal Foreign Minister also encouragement received. LobbyControl, a German NGO, defended the federal minister with several [tweets](#). It must be possible to bring experts from outside into the ministries. The transfers in the opposite direction are more of a problem. And anyway: lobbying for non-material goals should not be equated with organizations that pursue it for their own financial purposes.

After all, the organization admitted that Morgan would have to represent the interests of the federal government in the future and not those of Greenpeace.

An organization that, according to its own website, wants to be a counterweight to the ever-increasing influence of think tanks, PR agencies and their tricks, denies the problem. Our lobbying is better than your lobbying...

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Annalena Baerbock. Credit: CGN

But apart from the problem of hiring a lobbyist in an important and representative position within the federal government, the question of Greenpeace's "ideal goals" also arises. Is Greenpeace really an organization that works for the common good? Is Greenpeace a serious organization that achieves positive things? And is Morgan, as the former head of this organization, actually an added value for the German state?

Looking at Greenpeace's activities, the affirmative answer to these questions seems unlikely. The organization has been engaged in populist and sensational activism for years.

Trespassing, theft, assault and populism: is this what serious activism looks like?



The organization is consistently against clean energy production methods, such as nuclear energy. By spreading misinformation about the cost and safety of nuclear energy, Greenpeace is depriving the world

of a safe and clean source of energy that can continuously produce energy regardless of weather conditions. The consequences of this are clearly visible in Germany: After the messed up energy transition, nuclear power plants were replaced by much more harmful alternatives: coal and gas.

Organizations like Greenpeace, which function as a kind of intellectual elite of “green” parties, bear a large share of the blame. Yet environmental concerns are not just a preference for clean air. In the end, it is human lives that are the price for German energy policy.

This is relatively easy to calculate: According to a rather [conservative calculation](#), about 0.074 people die per terawatt hour in the production of nuclear energy. With (natural) gas it is already about 2.8 people, with coal [24.6](#) per terawatt hour, about 330 times more!

In December 2019, the American scientists Stephen Jarvis, Olivier Deschenes and Akshaya Jha published an [essay](#) in which they put the costs of the energy transition at around 12 billion euros per year. About 70% of these costs consist of an excess mortality of 1100 people per year, which results from the fact that coal-fired power plants are now operating locally instead of nuclear power plants. Thanks to the energy transition, a small settlement this every year – from cancer, chronic lung diseases, and other consequences of energy production from coal.

But Greenpeace was not only able to influence politics in this area: the activists are also very successful in the area of ????GMOs and genetic engineering.

The chances of genetic engineering are immense: economically, medically and from an agricultural point of view.

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We owe the mRNA vaccines from BioNTech, Pfizer and Moderna, as well as the vector vaccines from Johnson&Johnson and AstraZeneca to decades of research into GMOs and gene editing. But not “only” COVID vaccinations are produced in this way, as an entry in [Britannica](#) shows: We also owe genetic engineering to other medical innovations, such as the hepatitis B vaccination, which is produced by genetically modified yeast bacteria.

A little less than half a billion people suffer from diabetes: many of them have to take insulin externally. Without the synthetic insulin produced by genetically modified E. coli bacteria, insulin produced by pig pancreas would still have to be used: a much less efficient and animal-friendly alternative.

We see further examples of successfully implemented GMO research in agriculture. Probably the strongest example in connection with Greenpeace activism is the “Golden Rice”, a type of rice developed by German scientists, which contains about [23 times more vitamin A](#) than “natural” types of rice.



Credit: Food Navigator

Up to 500,000 children worldwide go blind each year due to [vitamin A deficiency](#). About half of these children die within a year of going blind. This is precisely why the golden rice developed by German scientists Peter Beyer and Ingo Potrykus is such an important innovation: it affects the lives of thousands of people.

It is gratifying to see that golden rice is now available for sale in the Philippines, a country where vitamin A deficiency is one of the top public health problems. American and Canadian authorities also confirm the safety of the rice variety.

However, not everyone sees progress as positively as science or well-known donors such as the “[Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#)”. Since the development, which now goes back 20 years, groups such as Greenpeace have been waging a smear campaign against the rice variety and against genetic engineering. Through this anti-scientific campaign, activists are slowing the market introduction of such innovations, with devastating consequences, especially in areas most affected by vitamin A deficiency. But progress is also being hampered in developed countries where new innovations could emerge: like the [Global Gene Editing Regulation Index](#) of the Consumer Choice Center shows that the procedure is largely banned within the EU. Despite the remarkable achievements of science, groups like Greenpeace are still impeding progress and thus slowing down the solution to important problems: through innovations in agriculture, land and other resources such as water, fertilizer and pesticides could

be used more sparingly and therefore more efficiently, a great opportunity for the poorer regions of our world. Brilliant research can also address nutrient deficiencies, as in the case of vitamin A and golden rice.

In other areas, too, such as the development of novel drugs and therapies, thousands if not millions of lives could be saved.

In summary, the verdict for Greenpeace and Annalena Baerbock can only be negative. Greenpeace is a thoroughly harmful organization whose operations are responsible for millions of deaths. They engage in populist and anti-scientific activism and campaigns that create skepticism and fear of safe and innovative methods among the population. The hiring of Jennifer Morgan is not only a scandal from the point of view of political seriousness: what the lobbyist fought for is even worse.

The call to listen to science, a call that the Greens have made a kind of trademark, must not be selective. Using science for one's own political ends seems dishonest when one simply chooses not to listen in areas like nuclear energy or genetic engineering.

Therefore, dear "Greens": Listen to science, even to those that do not fit into the world view. And better keep your hands off Greenpeace – in the long run this will help everyone.

[Editor's note: This article was originally published in German and has been translated and edited for clarity.]

Adam Mazik is a contributor to the Consumer Choice Center.

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