

BRICS+G – Sustainability and Growth in Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Germany

Initial Questions for an International Dialogue Project Sponsored by the GTZ and the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)

Germany is searching for a new type of growth policy. With its National Sustainability Strategy in 2002, Germany introduced a new perspective on generation equality, quality of life, social cohesion, and global responsibility. Goals and measures in important policy fields with ecological, economical, and social relevance were made concrete. Regular and transparent balance and success monitoring are an integral component of sustainable policy-making. The German Council for Sustainable Development is also searching for an “external perspective”, and a dialogue above and beyond the borders of Germany.

In many ways, Germany is still far from sustainable development. Most importantly, we do not have economic growth that creates an important condition for sufficient employment independent from the consumption of resources, that lives up to its global responsibility, and that does not divide society but instead offers opportunities for everyone. A type of development is being sought that will not endanger the opportunities of future generations but instead allow them to flourish.

“BRICS + G” is an international and national dialogue project cooperating with Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – all countries where further dynamic economic growth has been predicted. It has been assumed that in the near future these countries will be economically stronger than Europe, the USA, and Japan. Germany hopes to examine its own positions in the dialogue, using these as a basis for coordinating future economic development and sustainable policies more effectively. This broad dialogue on sustainable strategies will also make an important contribution to urgently needed progress toward reaching UN Millennium development goals.

The BRICS countries have a much stronger relative economic growth pattern than Germany; what do their sustainable policies look like – especially in the important areas of resource consumption and social standards? What can we learn from the BRICS countries, what can they learn from us? Against a background of increasing economic and therefore political power, will they be successful in integrating countries from the “south” into global markets?

The German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) and the International Corporation for Cooperation GTZ have initiated the BRICS + G dialogue project, inviting experts from these countries to participate in a dialogue on sustainability, growth, and the significance of sustainability strategies.

The German Council for Sustainable Development advises the German Federal Government and draws up proposals on sustainable development in the economy, politics, and society. According to German experience in sustainable policies, the following questions are of special interest. Further points of discussion are also welcome.

The Dynamics of Growth and Sustainable Development

How are the effects of economic growth related to sustainable development: is growth an engine for sustainable development, and under which conditions? Does growth need to be restrained when it occurs too quickly?

Which roles do national sustainability strategies play in the face of industrial growth processes that provide stronger incentive to develop than the sponsoring projects of external development cooperations?

Which contributions to the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns do national sustainability strategies make on the one hand, and projects from development cooperation work on the other (Johannesburg, Plan of Implementation)?

How is global responsibility related to national sustainability strategies? Which roles do model projects and partnerships play?

Which demands do the growth strategies in the BRICS countries make on German cooperative development work?

Sustainability Strategies and Participation Processes

How are the players spoken to, included, and involved within the framework of the respective national sustainability strategy?

Which strategies have been applied toward addressing and coming to terms with conflicts of goals; which were successful, which were not, and why?

How is society's dialogue on sustainability organised, initiated, and promoted?

How are as many development chances given to as many people as possible? Which roles are played by education and knowledge management?

How can "bottom up" initiatives from the regional and community levels, for example, be articulated and included?

Which incentives do sustainability strategies provide for motivating players from the private economy to resource-conserving behaviour? What importance does the legislation of sustainability rights have, for example in the areas of corporate liability, licensing, soil/land use, and citizen enablement?

How is the formation of local networks promoted? How do regional and local levels affect national sustainability strategies? How is collaboration between national policies and the local Agenda 21 promoted?

Which roles does corporate social responsibility play within the framework of sustainability policies, and how is the commitment of German companies judged?

Energy Economics

How can “sustainable energy economics” be defined?

What is the outlook for the clean utilisation of fossil energy, renewable energy, and nuclear energy? Which role is assigned to Germany’s potential for innovation?

How is energy economics’ orientation toward sustainable development promoted by sustainability strategies (for example, by means of renewable energy, retrofitting the supply of power to use more efficient techniques)?

What role do national sustainability strategies play in the future development of energy generation?

Water and Natural Resources, Food Supply, Agriculture, and Regional Development

Will the Millennium Goals be achieved? What role do national sustainability strategies play? What strategies will be developed for upgrading access to potable water, as well as limiting pollutants? How will the dissemination and creation of capacity for knowledge be organised?

What importance will national sustainability strategies assume in the management of water resources (markets, quality control, individual responsibility)? How will and can access to water and control of water quality be improved, and the public power supply be extended?

What roles do national sustainability strategies play in decisions on water supply, securing the food supply, managing natural resources, and standardising ecological and social process and product standards?