

German Council for Sustainable Development In a nutshell: information on recent work items and modalities

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The German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) is an advisory body mandated by and reporting back to the German Federal Government. Appointed ad personam by Chancellor Angela Merkel for a three-year term the 15 members are free to set their agenda. The RNE was first established in April 2001 by then Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Its work is facilitated by a General Secretary and his staff.

Tasks

The Federal Government has entrusted the RNE with the following tasks:

- Developing contributions to the national sustainable development strategy by responding to questions raised by Government or, additionally, choosing independent agenda points;
- Suggesting concrete areas for action and projects
- Boosting public discussion on sustainability

Chair

Marlehn Thieme chairs the RNE since 29 February 2012, and was a long standing member before. She is a member of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and director of the CSR section at Deutsche Bank AG. Olaf Tschimpke, president of NABU (Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union), is the RNE deputy chair.

Mission Statement

Sustainable development entails treating environmental aspects on an equal footing with social and economic aspects. Making this abundantly clear is one of the Council's missions. Future-oriented management means that we have to leave future generations a globally intact ecological, social and economic system. The one cannot be achieved without the others.

The RNE seeks to make sustainable development a fundamental goal and field of action in all areas of the political sphere. It works towards citizens living a sustainable lifestyle and towards a broad public discussion on sustainability. It urges businesses and institutions to make their economic activities sustainable, to face the challenges posed by sustainability and to make use of its opportunities. The RNE seeks to broaden the discussion on sustainability within society and to make the outcomes of this more effective and more binding.

Work-in-progress

The Council took part in further advancing the national **strategy** for sustainable development (NSDS) in critical dialogue with the Federal Government and political, economic and social stakeholders. The NSDS was relaunched in 2012, the next update is scheduled for 2016.

The Council issued the *German Sustainability Code* as a transparent tool for companies to strengthen the steering impact of sustainability reporting and advancing the awareness of the financial services industries. With more than 50 German major companies having signed up and declared their compliance the Government is now seeking attention also with public companies, and the RNE is currently discussing ways and means to europeanise the Code and introducing it to the EU debate on the future of corporate sustainability reporting.

The *Sustainable Shopping Basket*, a shopping guide addressing the private consumer, has been updated recently and provides reliable guidance through the multitude of the product labels and brands in respect to sustainable development. An associated mobil application (app) is under development.

Most recent **policy** recommendations of the Council address the issue of energy efficiency, the volatile and problematic state of the financial markets, the EU Common Agricultural Policy, and the introduction of a circular economy where it does not yet exist, in particular for strategic raw materials.

In February 2013, on the occasion of the 300 years anniversary of the publication of a first book on sustainable forest policies by Carl von Carlowitz, the Council together with the Bertelsmann Foundation hosted a youth **vision dialogue conference** Contemporary Carlowitz. The dialogue conference reflected on the cultural heritage and developed ideas and concepts for the challenges of the modern society.

RNE is continuing to facilitate the dialogue - initiative of some 25 Lord Mayors on green cities and **sustainable urban development**. Published these days is a catalogue on the local policy aspects of the German Energiewende underlining the need to strengthening local communities.

Upcoming is the second **Peer Review** on Sustainable Development Policies in Germany. On request of the Federal Government the RNE facilitates the work of eight international experts, chaired by Prof Bjorn Stigson, former President of the World Business Council for SD. Publication is foreseen for Autumn 2013.

The RNE continues encouraging the work of local initiatives and projects in its "Werkstatt N" quality label for outstanding sustainability initiatives.

As a primer, in 2011/12, the RNE took benefit from a new feature in the RNE work modalities and invited an outstanding expert to become an additional Member of the RNE. Jochen Zeitz, then CEO of Puma SE, joined the RNE and committed to leading a project on how to implement a corporate full cost accounting that would calculate environmental and social profits and losses.

The Council's annual public conference develops into a political sustainability summit. The Council is committed to support the German Sustainability Award as another major event to debate and foster sustainable development in the practise of private enterprises and, for the first time in 2012, cities and local communities.

The Council is a member of the European network consisting of European Environment and Sustainable Development Councils (EEAC), and is active in a series of other networks, inter alia on science and research.

All **publications**, newsletter information and press releases are available from *www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de*.

Council Members

Marlehn Thieme, chairwoman of the Council, member of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), director at Deutsche Bank AG

Olaf Tschimpke, deputy chair of the Council, president of NABU (Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union)

Dr Heinrich Graf von Bassewitz, farmer, federal commissioner for organic farming of the German Farmers' Association (DBV) and member of the DBV Board

Dr Ursula Eid, former parliamentary secretary for International Development Cooperation

Dr Joachim Faber, senior advisor of Allianz SE

Dr Hans Geisler, former Saxony minister for Social Affairs, Health, Youth and Families

Alois Glück, president of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZdK)

Walter Hirche, former parliamentary secretary for the Ministry of the Environment, former minister in Lower Saxony and Brandenburg; president of the German Commission for UNESCO

Prof. Dr Lucia A. Reisch, professor at Copenhagen Business School, visiting professor at Zeppelin University, Friedrichshafen

Max Schön, managing partner of Max Schön Verwaltungsgesellschaft mbH & Co. Service KG, president of the German Association for the Club of Rome, chairman of the supervisory board of the DESERTEC Foundation, Executive director of the initiative 2° - German CEOs for Climate Protection

Dr Wolfgang Schuster, former lord mayor of the city of Stuttgart, professor and managing director of Institut für Nachhaltige Stadtentwicklung GmbH Stuttgart

Dr Eric Schweitzer, member of the board of ALBA Group, president of the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce, DIHK

Michael Vassiliadis, chairman of the Industrial Union of Mining, Chemicals and Energy (IG BCE)

Hubert Weinzierl, honorary president of the German League for Nature and Environment (DNR), chairman of the board of advisors of the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU)

Prof. Dr Angelika Zahrnt, honorary chairwoman of "Friends of the Earth Germany" (Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz Deutschland, BUND), professor

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