



Work Programme

of the Council for Sustainable Development until June 2016 and Working Steps in 2014

Berlin, 8 October 2013

1. Preliminary Note

The Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) adopts this work programme for the time of its mandate until June 2016. The issues the Council will act on and the political initiatives it will develop and recommend are based on this programme.

The Council for Sustainable Development will update its work programme at suitable intervals. The Council reserves the right to work in a flexible way in order to efficiently utilise the time-constrained availability of the Council members and to work on additional issues as needed.

Excerpt from the rules of procedure as amended on 2 July 2013

§1 (2) In particular, the Council has the following tasks:

- a. The Council contributes to further developing the National Sustainability Strategy and suggests specific projects to implement it.
- b. The Council responds to inquiries submitted to it by the State Secretaries' Committee for Sustainable Development. The German Federal Government decides on the publication of these responses. In addition, the Council can express its opinion about issues of sustainable development without the State Secretaries' Committee's mandate, especially about the state of sustainability policy in specific fields of action.
- c. The Council promotes dialogue in society about sustainable development at the national and international level. The Council implements projects to effectively anchor the idea of sustainability in society and business.

§1 (3) The Council adopts a work programme. It should include working steps for the completion of tasks according to §1 (2).

The working steps of the work programme are determined at the respective time as part of the annual planning for 2014, 2015 and 2016.



2. Political Priorities as Points of Reference

2.1. Germany

Following an in-depth evaluation, the Council will pursue the suggestions and proposals of the international Peer Review 2013 as part of its work programme.

The Council intends to follow the recommendation of the international Peer Review 2013 to enhance its role in providing a platform and acting as an anchor for network activities that involve third parties and other organisations. Details are to be determined following the submission of the Peer Review on 23 September 2013, as part of the internal evaluation and the public discussion on 4 November 2013 and beyond.

The German Federal Government plans a revision of the National Sustainability Strategy for the year 2016. Preparatory work is expected to start in early 2014. The Council for Sustainable Development will formulate requirements and recommendations for the selection and supplementation of indicators, for flagship projects, stakeholder involvement and vision dialogues for the future, as well as for the selection of sustainability issues that must be put on the political agenda in the medium term.

Based on the considerations on measuring prosperity, quality of life and sustainability (“GDP and more”) submitted by the Study Commission “Growth, Wellbeing and Quality of Life” of the German Bundestag, the Council for Sustainable Development plans to recommend making such measurement part of the sustainability strategy and will also incorporate the approaches and results of the German Council of Economic Experts into this recommendation.

2.2. International

During the term of the mandate until the end of 2016, important decisions are pending in regard to global sustainability policy, especially those concerning sustainable development goals and the post-2015 MDG process in development policy as well as those in regard to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the continuation of an ambitious climate change strategy. At the European level, in addition to the consultations in the run-up to these processes, the development of European monetary policy and European energy policy are of similar importance.

The RNE will support the preparation of these decisions by advising the German Federal Government. The RNE will directly communicate its positions to the respective global civil society networks as well.

- United Nations and international agenda for sustainability

The UN General Secretary’s report of 5 August 2013 addressed to the General Assembly emphasises the high potential effectiveness of national institutions such as councils for sustainable development, parliamentary sustainability committees and sustainability commissioners. Regional networks of national committees have been in operation or are being established and can have a much greater political impact,



provided that they receive firm political support. Within the limits of its possibilities, the Council for Sustainable Development will act to strengthen these networks and encourage learning through cross-national exchange.

International efforts to develop a global, universal post-2015 agenda are to be completed and the agenda adopted in 2015. It should combine the millennium development goals defined in 2000 and the sustainable development goals to be developed in the wake of the UN-Conference Rio+20 (2012).

As a national advisory committee, RNE will primarily address the German representatives in this debate. In addition, it will introduce its considerations and recommendations directly into the international debate, preferably at the level of the councils for sustainable development and organised civil society.

- G8

In the course of the German G8 presidency in 2015, the RNE seeks to address issues concerning the transparency and validity of economic data to the extent that they are relevant to sustainability. An issue that needs to be addressed in this context is, for example, that businesses assume responsibility that their suppliers and production facilities abroad observe human rights, especially in countries where the production and extraction of raw materials occur under dubious conditions. The “non-financial information” that businesses provide to both competitors and the state further expands the scope of corporate responsibility by including the supply chain, their own vehicle fleets or IT inventory.

The RNE will discuss the necessary changes and adjustments to the regulatory framework, for instance, in regard to climate change, the increasing scarcity of natural resources and the impacts of demographic change.

- EU

In the view of the Council for Sustainable Development, German politics and the EU policies of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council attach far too little importance to the European political dimension of sustainability policy. The Council for Sustainable Development will continue to encourage and support a strong commitment of the German Federal Government by providing concrete recommendations.

Within the limits of its possibilities, the Council will directly address European institutions in specific matters (so far, the Council has done so, for instance, to support the cooperation of the councils for sustainable development of the European member states with the European Economic and Social Committee or by participating in Commission consultations).

- Climate Change Policy

The Council for Sustainable Development will thoroughly review the state of global climate change policy, consider ways of strategically linking national and global



approaches, and support opinion formation in Germany on matters of relevance to the ongoing UNFCCC negotiations. The latter includes, in particular, searching for concepts of sustainability that offer additional or new opportunities that are suitable for resolving or alleviating negotiation deadlocks resulting from the dominance of short-term interests.

This involves exploring bilateral options and lines of action as well. The global context of the German Sustainability Strategy, as has also been addressed in the Peer Review 2013, provides suitable starting points for this. These starting points are not limited to climate protection in the narrow sense but refer to the entire agenda of energy efficiency, smart energy solutions, urban development and sustainable building as well as resource efficiency.

- Corporate Strategies

The Council for Sustainable Development also seeks to establish the (German) Sustainability Code as an effective instrument in the international context. Both in society and capital markets, there are growing expectations that businesses concern themselves with sustainability. Systematic sustainability management lowers (capital) costs. The Council for Sustainable Development will contribute to strengthening this relationship.

Furthermore, the Council for Sustainable Development will make additional efforts to anchor the Sustainability Code in Germany's small and medium-sized business sector. The task is to strengthen the partly traditionally established, but also partly emerging understanding of sustainability as part of the concept of "Made in Germany" in that sector.

- Science, Research and Innovation

The Council for Sustainable Development wants to link sustainability more strongly to innovation and the advancement of science. Germany has high potential in this respect. However, in view of the challenges Germany is facing, not enough is being done at this point, and progress in particular sectors is not sufficiently tied to the advancement of society as a whole.

The Council for Sustainable Development will make efforts to ensure that the sustainability agenda be taken into account to a greater extent in science and research. Within its own decision-making and work processes, research itself should take the idea of sustainability more strongly into consideration. Innovative research results should be more readily adopted by policy makers and business.

2.3 Communication

The Council sees a third, essential political point of reference in a more in-depth and improved political communication of sustainability.



The focus must be to “more clearly and explicitly” draw out the implications of the idea of sustainability and to sharpen the concept in terms of its concrete application. This is a task to be tackled especially by those groups and social circles that are concerned with new forms of knowledge about transformations, interrelations (nexus) and involvement and are looking for ways of feeding this knowledge into political processes and corporate decisions.

The three-dimensional approach to sustainability must be filled with life and become a more conscious experience. This is not only a task of communication but above all of tangible, hands on work. A suitable area of practice in this respect is how we create urban and rural living environments for the future and accommodate our needs for mobility, buildings, provision of goods and services, proximity and quality of life.

Cooperation structures and networks must be further developed and newly created if sustainability strategies in politics, business and society are to be successful. Large discrepancies in terms of information, power and financial resources or differences between disciplinary communities often hinder necessary cooperation. The Council wants to work toward a better understanding of how cooperation can also be successful in the face of asymmetrically distributed informational power and capacity, and of how to overcome the barriers to cooperation across disciplines and sectors.

In view of the *Energiewende*, the Council for Sustainable Development in the past has already demanded better coordinated communication in society and business as well as an effective involvement of citizens in decision making. This applies even more so in the case of the sustainability strategy. Political communication must not be designed as a measure geared toward political implementation once political decisions have been made since this would limit such communication to serving promotional purposes only. Rather, political communication should contribute to better utilising the potential for aligning and coordinating the approaches and initiatives of a multitude of actors at all levels of society, public administration and business.

The Council will adjust its ongoing projects such as Werkstatt N (Workshop N) and Action Week for Sustainability in order to more strongly reflect these objectives. Furthermore, the Council will make a stronger contribution to the development of a sustainable corporate culture (sustainability management, sustainable procurement and value chains, compliance with standards along the entire supply chain) by supporting the exchange of ideas and learning from good practices. The Council supports enhancing the role of the event “German Sustainability Award” as feasible. At the same time, the Council will also encourage the use of other event formats, especially public events by museums, trade fairs and media as well as by businesses in order to deepen the idea of sustainability and a sustainable economy.

3. Decisions on Structural Arrangements

The Council for Sustainable Development’s rules of procedure, enacted on 2 July 2013, stipulate that the Council invite the chairperson(s) and deputy chairperson(s) of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development of the German Bundestag to the Council’s meetings. The agenda of the Council meetings will make allowance for this and specifically include items that are relevant to the medium-term agenda of both bodies.



The Council for Sustainable Development will make use of the option to invite outside experts to collaborate with the Council on specific projects and for a limited time.

Provided the sufficient availability of personnel and financial resources, the Council for Sustainable Development aims to be responsive to inquiries from other countries and from businesses to provide coaching in support of their own individual sustainability strategies.

Through a dialogue with interested parties in the area of sustainability and development policy, the Council for Sustainable Development seeks to evaluate which approaches and contents of the Peer Review process may be of interest to other countries and institutions and what is needed to realise these interests.

Generally, the work of the Council for Sustainable Development should be geared toward strengthening networks for sustainable development and ensuring more coherence in the different areas where activities concerned with sustainable development take place. For this purpose, the Council intends to invite to its regular meetings an outside expert in the role of “rapporteur” or in the role of “challenger” in order to discuss the most current developments in the area of “soft instruments” in particular. Outside experts are to be federal ministers and their high-ranking representatives as well as local politicians, representatives of civil society and business.

The Council will continue its cooperation with actors at the *Länder* level.

4. Important Issues

Overarching Aspects

The Council will further develop activities that have proven successful in the past. Important issues that have already been worked on in the past will be pursued further and deepened by considering current aspects. In the process, the Council will regularly and fundamentally address the key concepts of society, the perspectives of the citizens (to the extent that representative data is available) and the conception of humanity that is implicit in questions about responsibility and normative values. The international dimension must always be considered as well – an aspect that has been advocated in and adopted from the Peer Review report. This also involves taking Germany’s international role into consideration.

Energiewende

For the Council for Sustainable Development, the *Energiewende* plays an important thematic role as it represents a paradigm for sustainable development in its entirety, also for the international dimension of Germany’s sustainability strategy and climate change policy. The *Energiewende* and all of the aspects it involves will continue to play an important role in the work of the Council for Sustainable Development. In this process, the Council will not focus attention on the (definitely important) technical aspects of the endeavour only – for instance, concerning grid development, the upkeep of back-up systems, matters of efficiency or regarding the political aspects of the reform of the German Renewable Energy Act (*Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz, EEG*) and the Energy Industry Act (*Energiewirtschaftsgesetz, EnWG*) – but will also address the risk-benefit ratio as well as the ratio of costs and expected

profits. The climate policy issues involved in emissions trading, an international law regime for mitigation measures, and other approaches to climate policy will always be given attention as well.

Contrary to the current mainstream focus on the development of electricity prices, the Council for Sustainable Development desires to more clearly emphasise the benefits of the *Energiewende* for society (intergenerational justice, mobility, the crafts and the mechanical engineering industry, knowledge society, rural areas, high-performance infrastructure) and for Germany as an industrial location. This requires considering the *Energiewende* not only from a technical point of view but also from the perspective of cultural studies and sociology. It also requires paying attention to the fact that the *Energiewende* serves as a model for other industrial and emerging countries.

Other key issues are demographic change, public services, the disparity between urban and rural areas and the quality of work as well as issues concerning the domain of education, science and academia.

Dialogues about the Future and Vision Workshops

Building on the positive experiences from and results of past RNE initiatives (Contemporary Carlowitz, U27 and Vision_2050, “*Die einhundert jüngsten Kommunalparlamentarier*” [The One Hundred Youngest Municipal Council Members], Mission Sustainability, Creativity Workshops), the Council wants to establish a dialogue about the future involving representatives of the generation 2050 as an integral part of the National Sustainability Strategy. In order to do so, the Council seeks to collaborate with third parties on a partnership basis. Potential partners are foundations and organisations that improve the selection or nomination of participants, provide sophisticated methods to support the realisation of projects, and contribute to a broader communication of project results.

Raw Materials Economy, Recycling, Strategic Raw Materials

Following the 2011 recommendations focusing on Germany as a resource-rich country, the Council will work on suggestions to further improve and expand the circular economy, with a particular focus on the retrieval of recyclable materials as well as new products and new product cycles. In the foreground in this respect are the implementation of transformative knowledge relating to technologies and the organisation of work flows within the regulatory framework as well as incentives for more innovations.

Issues relating to the raw materials economy and environmental aspects are to play a stronger role in municipal policy and urban development. Here, there is potential for efficiency that can be tapped and for making significant strides toward a sustainable city.

Agriculture and Land Use Policy

The challenge of sustainable forms of agriculture and land use that meet present-day requirements (the 30-ha goal for the containment of land use and promotion of organic farming and agricultural reform) has repeatedly been and will continue to be a core issue for the Council for Sustainable Development. The Council will make an enhanced effort to incorporate an international perspective and explore ways of ensuring and expanding an



appropriate knowledge base. As the various aspects of sustainability strategies have indeed found their way into the respective expert communities, the focus now must primarily be on creating awareness among policy makers and actors in sustainability markets for alternative paths of action.

Green Economy

To date, the Council for Sustainable Development has already made a mark on the issue of “green economy” by launching a multitude of initiatives of a regulatory and communicative kind. Meanwhile, green economy has taken hold on a broader scale as an increasing number of businesses have been moving toward an active sustainability agenda and various actors have been making use of rating/ranking and reporting – partly having turned such assessment into a business in its own right. This is good; yet there are also unfavourable developments. A certain complacency can be observed, and there is no movement to counteract the trend toward an increasingly differentiated landscape of sustainability schemes and ensure common standards where appropriate. The result is increasing complexity, which runs the risk of expediting the loss of credibility. Internationally there is the risk of protectionism.

The Council for Sustainable Development will engage in efforts to increase and strengthen the share of creative innovations and, at the same time, make recommendations that alert political decision makers to the need to gear the regulatory framework toward a green economy. This may require setting priorities for certain material flows and, most notably, in matters of foreign trade. Industry-specific roadmaps and visions for the period 2020-2030, based on the involvement of employers, employees and civil society stakeholders, will play a key role.

The Council for Sustainable Development will drive forward with the implementation of the German Sustainability Code (GSC). Doing so requires pursuing Europeanisation and cross-national partnerships as well as improving its usefulness as a platform and clearinghouse mechanism. The Council for Sustainable Development sees an obligation for the financial market to live up to its commitment to reward businesses for their sustainability management in significant and transparent ways. The Council for Sustainable Development continues to urgently recommend to the German Federal Government to substantially and constructively participate in opinion formation at the European level in matters of corporate reporting requirements.

Lord Mayors’ Dialogue “Sustainable City”

The Council for Sustainable Development will comply with the wish of the mayors involved in this dialogue to provide a platform for strategic dialogue. In recent years, the Council for Sustainable Development has made successful efforts in various areas to support local sustainability initiatives through research, educational networks and the recognition of best practices, thus enhancing involvement to supplement local agenda activities in meaningful ways. What matters now is, on the one hand, to better and more precisely assess and communicate local experiences. On the other hand, the Council for Sustainable Development – in the context of its activities – will press for a substantial involvement of the municipalities in the federal sustainability dialogue.



Consumption

The project “Sustainable Shopping Basket” will be continued. Its routine revision and update and the use of social networks provide opportunities to reflect on the project and encourage new ways of cooperation. The improvement of sustainability labelling schemes for products is a matter that the Council for Sustainable Development will continue to pursue intensively. In particular, there must be a successful change in the cultural mindset that often underlies the design of showrooms and products and reduces the consumer in questionable ways to a few characteristics that have little to do with sustainability. Instead, customer awareness increasingly focuses on quality (albeit not enough). A scientifically-based and empirically grounded assessment of consumer options at an early stage would be an important step to improve the comprehensibility of product information and provide easier access to data relevant to consumer behaviour.

Workshop N and Action Week for Sustainability

These projects will be continued. The goal is to establish, to the extent possible, a network-based type of competition for awarding the title of Werkstatt N (Workshop N). The Council for Sustainable Development will also ensure that the project, more than before, integrates ongoing activities in other areas that have a similar focus. The intent is to better link the Action Week for Sustainability to comparable formats.

Education

Once the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in 2014 comes to a close, the Council for Sustainable Development will make efforts to intensify the implementation of new methods and the insights gained, also from practical successes, across the entire spectrum of educational institutions. In this process, creating alliances with network partners outside of education is an important step to be expanded and strengthened. The Council for Sustainable Development plans to play a supportive role in this respect.

The Council wants to prompt new initiatives in and across schools and the entire education system and continue to encourage schools and student groups that have already launched exemplary initiatives, for instance on climate protection.

Science and Sustainability

As concerns sustainability, the agendas of important research and science institutions have recently begun to undergo change. This is a positive sign. The Council for Sustainable Development wants to strengthen this momentum and increase its effectiveness. It will speak out in favour of a targeted increase in research expenditures and measures to more strongly promote innovation in science, especially in terms of how the science system itself deals with the challenge of sustainability.

The Council for Sustainability expects the complexity of scientific thought in the field of sustainability to increase and “knowledge“ to become ever more fragmented and specific. At the same time, society is increasingly asking for comprehensive insights and knowledge about how things interrelate. According to its own capacities and in cooperation with partners, the



Council for Sustainable Development wants to pursue the development of excellent, transdisciplinary approaches and, where appropriate, provide suggestions for applying the criterion of sustainability in transformative science. In the future, the Council plans to introduce to a greater extent the requirements of implementing sustainability strategies into the scientific justification of so-called planetary boundaries for resource use. This involves aspects such as data accuracy and the assessment standards underlying precautionary and protective measures, and the legal implications thereof, as well as the assessment criteria applied in verification, regionalisation and reporting.

Public Services, Health

The demographic development in Germany entails a variety of consequences for people's lives, for example in regard to the length of working life, work, housing and construction, health care, infrastructures, education and mobility as well as values, attitudes and family ties.

The social dimension of sustainability, however, remains underdeveloped. Generally it is seen as no more than a secondary condition to ecological and economic criteria. This does justice neither to social challenges nor to those latter criteria. The Council for Sustainable Development strives for a stronger involvement of welfare and health policy organisations as well as social economy institutions in the National Sustainability Strategy.

Mobility and Urban Development

More than ever, sustainability requires rethinking mobility policy. The Council for Sustainable Development will continue to support the positive initiatives in the context of the respective dialogue projects as part of the National Sustainability Strategy and develop recommendations for extending them to other mobility issues.

5. Events

The series of annual conferences will be continued in 2014 and beyond since this event format has proven its worth as a kind of political sustainability summit. However, as in the past, the Council for Sustainable Development seeks to further develop this event format both in terms of methods and content. With this in mind, there is a need to consider cooperation schemes for conducting the forums, new presentation models such as short plenary presentations, especially on international sustainability issues, as well as formats for innovative competitions and issue-focused political roundtable discussions. The Council members' role as hosts of the conference is to become more visible.

In addition to the annual conferences, the Council for Sustainable Development is to organise an annual political forum once a year; it will function as a meeting place for sustainability politics and will be organised so as to provide a platform for dialogue and strategy formulation.

The Carl-von-Carlowitz lectures will be continued. Depending on the circumstances, the lecture will be integrated into the annual conference.



In scientific matters, the Council seeks to establish and deepen cooperation with the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, IASS, in Potsdam, Germany.

6. Working Steps for 2014

The Council intends to focus on the following priority issues in 2014:

- Implementation of the Peer Review report, especially the recommended institutional and governance changes, the recommendations to the Council for Sustainable Development as well as the recommendations concerning basic structures and projects for revising the sustainability strategy

with the goal of a political statement endorsing the implementation of the Peer Review report

- Circular Economy

with the goal of formulating a political recommendation for the practice and prospects of the idea of a circular economy for production, consumption and new economic models

- *Energiewende* and Climate Change Strategies

with the goal of providing issue-related support for processes and negotiations, also considering the global dimension

- Research Knowledge and Technology, Education

with the goal of making a political recommendation for research policy, where appropriate based on examples from land use and forestry or other priority issues of the Council

- New cooperation initiatives for sustainability strategies

with the goal of formulating a political recommendation to the German Federal Government and interested parties, based on best-practice examples as well as a deficiency analysis

Members of the Federal Cabinet and practitioners in the respective area of concern are to be invited as guests.

Expert Advisors

Expert advisors are persons with a high degree of recognition and expertise, who are co-opted for a period of time as temporary members of the Council.



Education

The Council for Sustainable Development plans to conduct a project to support the continuation of the UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Appreciation of nature and sustainability

In an increasingly urban, technology-driven culture, the Council for Sustainable Development desires to promote society's appreciation of nature, resources and ecology as a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Other possible issues:

- Measurement of, reporting on and verification of sustainability in businesses and the economy
- A quality label for sustainable products or production processes
- Construction and housing

Motto and agenda of the annual conference 2014

Comprehend – Change – Communicate
Fourteenth annual conference of the Council for Sustainable Development
2 June 2014, from 9:30am to 6:00pm

Topic of the Autumn Forum of the Council for Sustainable Development 2014

Europe, European sustainability strategy, global context

Carl-von-Carlowitz Lecture 2014

How have global changes changed our understanding of the world? And what does this history of knowledge mean for today's sustainability strategy?

Prof Dr Jürgen Renn, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (tbc)

Action Days for Sustainability

The "Action Days for Sustainability" will take place nationwide from 23-29 June 2014. It is planned to repeat the event in the years to come and to combine it with third-party activities.