



Federal Ministry  
for the Environment, Nature Conservation  
and Nuclear Safety



## “Local Communities and Municipalities as Innovators for Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns”

**Proceedings of the expert dialogue held on 18 June 2004 at the German Federal Environmental Agency**

prepared on behalf of the

**German Federal Environmental Agency (Umweltbundesamt, UBA)**

and the

**German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit, BMU)**

by

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# **1 Introduction**

The expert dialogue “Local Communities and Municipalities as Innovators for Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns” took place at the German Federal Environmental Agency on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004 with approximately 35 participants from different stakeholder groups and was the first expert dialogue within the national dialogue on sustainable consumption and production patterns in Germany.

The goal of the national dialogue process is to implement at national level the decision of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg to develop a ten-year framework of programmes to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. An impressive amount of “social capital” in this context has already accumulated in Germany in the form of projects, initiatives and actions. However, as the general public scarcely takes note of this, the visibility of the existing wealth of approaches needs to be enhanced. A breakthrough on a large scale has yet to be achieved which would necessitate to overcome the currently prevailing fragmentation of approaches. The national dialogue under way offers an opportunity to serve as a remedy to these shortcomings, insofar as it aims at creating a societal forum where people and institutions can present their concepts and communicate their experiences. Hopefully, in the long run this process will also provide new momentum to the ongoing societal debate about sustainability as a whole.

The starting point to the national dialogue process was the conference “Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns – National Dialogue on the Follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development” on February 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004 in Berlin. While the conference brought together a wide range of actors and initiatives, providing an overview of existing approaches and necessities of action, the objective of the expert dialogues is to prepare further steps of implementation focusing on specific subjects and groups of actors. This is done by presenting existing projects and initiatives, identifying factors of success as well as obstacles to progress. In this process the German Federal Environmental Agency (UBA) and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) largely take the role of facilitators. A major aim of the expert dialogues is also to initiate new partnerships of actors and projects.

The document at hand contains a summary of the main points of discussion that emerged at the expert dialogue. The presentations that were held are summarised with a focus on these discussion points. The summary of the expert dialogue is preceded by some general background information about the role of municipalities in the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns at national and international levels.

## **2 Background**

### **Opportunities of action for municipalities**

The reshaping of consumption and production patterns aimed at creating sustainable development is a project that necessitates the participation of a broad spectrum of actors in order to be completed successfully. This process cannot be controlled centrally, nor can it be directed by a top-down approach. The development of societal consumption and production

patterns depends on decisions that each and every business and consumer must make on their own. Hence the important role of the municipal level, since it is the political decision-making arena that is the closest to the individual citizen and the individual business. Particularly in Germany with its system of municipal self-administration, many essential decisions and shaping options rest with the municipal level.

From the consumers' point of view, many factors that influence consumption patterns – such as the general quality of life, the range of recreational choices and shopping possibilities – are determined to a large extent by the local conditions of the place where they live. From the perspective of businesses – particularly small and medium-sized enterprises – the qualification of a community as a location for their activities is a major determinant. Conversely, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production on the municipal level can also positively affect the general living standards of a community, insofar as it contributes to strengthening the awareness about local and regional structures and fosters dialogue among different parts of the society.

In order to implement initiatives for sustainable development, municipal administrations can cooperate with a range of local partners, which quite frequently have started initiatives on their own and may even act as the driving force of the whole process. Aside from citizens' initiatives and non-governmental organisations, potential partners can be found particularly among industry and commerce, as well as schools, adult education centres and other educational institutions, and churches.

Transport and infrastructure policy is one of the areas that offer a multitude of opportunities for promoting sustainable behaviour at local level. This includes reducing the use of cars by setting up innovative public transport systems (e.g. Karlsruhe, where the surrounding areas have been successfully connected with the centre) or attractive networks of cycle paths (e.g. Münster, Erlangen). In the future, municipal road tolls, such as the London congestion charge or the schemes applied in Norwegian cities, could also be an option for German cities. Urban planning can be applied as a tool to reduce transport as well.

Public services run by municipalities in the areas of electricity, drinking water, waste and waste water have the chance to directly influence consumers' behaviour. Pricing schemes can be designed in a way to set incentives for sustainable use. Furthermore, municipal departments can engage in consumer information and awareness-raising in areas such as energy-saving and waste reduction. Public procurement at local level is a further starting point for action: local authorities account for 50 % of the total volume of public procurement in Germany; for the building sector, the figure is even as high as 75 %. However, in their decisions on procurement, local authorities have to take into account a host of legal prescriptions from various levels, including German federal law as well as EU legislation and WTO rules. Of course, there is also a variety of other factors that restrict local authorities' scope of action. From a legal point of view, their self-administration is limited in many regards (e.g. in fiscal policy or waste management). In practice, the difficult financial situation in which most municipalities currently find themselves further seriously limits their leeway.

## Reference points and structures at international level

The 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development gave an important signal for local action on sustainable development. In its Chapter 18, the Agenda 21 document adopted at Rio called on local authorities to enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organizations and private enterprises in order to achieve consensus on a "local Agenda 21" by 1996. In this context, Agenda 21 also calls for partnerships of international organisations such as those of the UN system or the International Union of Local Authorities. Furthermore, representatives of associations of local authorities are encouraged to increase the exchange of information and experience among communities. A survey undertaken in connection with the Johannesburg summit found that since 1992, around 6400 local authorities in 113 countries had started a local Agenda 21 process.<sup>1</sup> This quite positive development has been supported by numerous international initiatives (such as the Climate Alliance of European Cities with Indigenous Rainforest Peoples<sup>2</sup>) and actively promoted by international networks (e.g. ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability<sup>3</sup>).

At the UN expert meeting at Marrakesh 2003, which constituted the first step of the international process towards implementing the Johannesburg decision on sustainable consumption and production patterns, particular attention was dedicated to action at the municipal level. In this context, the specific situation of the developing world has to be kept in mind, where the main challenge related to sustainable consumption and production still consists in providing a reliable supply of basic services for all parts of the population.

## Local Agenda 21 and related activities in Germany

In Germany, around 2470 municipalities had initiated a local Agenda 21 process as of July 2004<sup>4</sup>. This means that Germany is by far the country hosting the greatest number of local Agenda 21 initiatives – approximately, every third municipality with a local Agenda 21 is situated in Germany. On the other hand, this figure makes up only 19 % of all German municipalities, whereas in Sweden, with an absolute number of 289, almost 100 % of all municipalities are engaged in a local Agenda 21 process.

Since 2002, Germany has a support structure at national level for local Agenda 21 initiatives, the *Bundesweite Servicestelle Lokale Agenda 21* (Nationwide service department Local Agenda 21) which is run by the private agency *Agenda-Transfer*. Supporting structures also exist at the level of the German federal states where focal points provide support for planning and designing the local Agenda 21 process, facilitate the exchange of experience among municipalities and provide information on events, training and specific issues. In addition, a "Local Agenda 21 Network for Germany" (*Lokales Agenda 21 Netzwerk Deutschland, LAND*) was founded by non-governmental organisations in cooperation with municipal Agenda

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<sup>1</sup> Second Local Agenda 21 Survey. Background Paper 15, submitted by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs / Commission on Sustainable Development 2002, DESA/DSD/PC2/BP15

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.klimabuendnis.de/english/update/frameset.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.iclei.org>

<sup>4</sup> Source: Agenda Transfer Agentur für Nachhaltigkeit GmbH, <http://www.agenda-transfer.net/agenda-service/admin/download/Beschluesse%2001-07-2004.pdf>

agencies. In addition to facilitating the exchange of experience among the participating local initiatives, this network is also intended to serve as a lobbying institution for improving the conditions at national level. Other institutions, such as consumer advice bureaux, were constituted independently of the Agenda 21 process but occasionally provide support to it. Within the subject of consumption and production, local Agenda initiatives have often put an emphasis on influencing the individual consumer's behaviour. For instance, many communities issued guides for shopping and repair. Furthermore, some communities initiated sustainable consumption projects involving "test households". Strengthening local and regional economic structures has been another focus of Agenda initiatives' work. This includes better marketing of regional food products by awareness-raising campaigns and cooperation schemes as well as experiments with alternative economic patterns, such as barter economy projects involving goods and services. Last but not least, a host of local initiatives are engaged in fair trade projects.

In other cases, cooperation projects with local business were initiated, focusing more on the production side. Such projects may involve big companies as well as small and medium-sized enterprises and their associations. Initiatives in this field include the *COUP 21* network in Nuremberg, the "Ulm initiative for sustainable economic development" (*Ulmer Initiativkreis Nachhaltige Wirtschaftsentwicklung*, unw) with its round-table approach and the *Ökoprofit* (eco-profit) model which was originally developed by the municipality of Graz (Austria) and meanwhile has spread to many German cities, its administering organisations varying from one place to another.

### **Results of the February 2004 national kick-off conference**

At the conference "Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns – National Dialogue on the Follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development" on February 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004, attention was drawn to the specificity of the federal structure of Germany, with each federal level pursuing its own approaches to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. The importance of the local level was particularly emphasised in connection with public procurement, as a big share of public investment is carried out at this level. In this respect, participants pointed to the possibility of promoting sustainable procurement by those local institutions which decide autonomously on their procurement actions, such as schools, nurseries and hospitals. It is especially in institutions of this sort that direct communication with citizens takes place and therefore public procurement decisions may provide a visible example for private behaviour. The potential of local initiatives to influence private consumer behaviour more directly was also highlighted. Local authority grants given to the purchasers of sustainable products, such as energy-saving households appliances, were observed to have contributed to establishing such products on the market.

A further point made at the conference was the role the local Agenda 21 played in providing a forum for dialogue and partnerships. Participants called for maintaining such forums at local and regional levels and further spreading good practice examples of successful cooperation models. Local Agenda 21 initiatives were also seen as a possible frame for promoting cooperation projects in the area of education, which create opportunities to experience sustainability in real-life situations.

### **3 Sustainability as an innovation opportunity for local development – on the way to new perspectives of action**

*Jutta Penning, Federal Environmental Agency – address of welcome*

*Albrecht Hoffmann, Bundesweite Servicestelle Lokale Agenda 21 (Nationwide service department Local Agenda 21)*

*Klaus Mischen, Senate Department of Urban Development, federal state and city of Berlin*

Local communities have an important role as a societal “experimenting ground” for sustainability. They form the setting to a multitude of economic, social and cultural activities and innovations. In spite of increasing globalisation, many people are still oriented towards their immediate social surroundings. Therefore the concept of sustainability can only become relevant if it gets materialised at the local level. During the 1990s, many initiatives for sustainable development, including consumption and production aspects, formed at local level, part of which were also supported by the German Federal Environmental Agency. Nowadays, however, such local initiatives have already grown beyond the experimental phase. As a consequence, the main task is not anymore to develop new ideas for projects, but to evaluate experience gathered and disseminate best practice. The state-of-the-art allows to draw the following conclusions concerning opportunities and obstacles.

A major problem for most projects at local level is low presence in the media and the general public. Peoples’ local and everyday activities usually are not deemed worth reporting. In order to gain publicity, a connection to big events is often necessary – as in the case of the recent international conference “Renewables 2004”, where some local energy projects were also presented. Even if in principle, information on projects might be available to a sufficient degree (e.g. in the good practice database “[www.gute-beispiele.net](http://www.gute-beispiele.net)” set up by the private agency *Agenda-Transfer*), initiatives on local sustainability are only familiar to a certain, limited audience. It remains difficult to spread awareness of their activities to “ordinary citizens” or political decision-makers.

This also concerns the added value of local projects on sustainability. Positive effects on individuals, such as health benefits, are rarely well communicated. However, it would not require much imagination to use them as part of a communication strategy for sustainable development. Regional economic circuits can contribute to establishing a positive emotional attachment to the local community, tying money and purchasing power to the region. Positive effects of achievements in this respect may also spread to areas such as culture and tourism. Therefore, in principle, local authorities should have a strong political interest in actively conveying information on sustainability initiatives to the public.

In order for projects to radiate locally and regionally, it is essential to build upon existing structures. This means, for instance, making use of established paths of distribution (e.g. fair-trade coffee sold in supermarkets and traditional cafés) and involving local businesses, such as skilled crafts enterprises in connection with programmes on energy conservation and the promotion of renewable energies. The representatives of such established structures tend to have a rather conservative orientation; all the greater the success if an initiative manages to convince them to participate.

Local Agenda 21 initiatives certainly have led to successful concepts and innovations. However, those engaged in such initiatives also report on fatigue and frustration. In many instances, initiatives are dependent on a handful of active people. Due to the generally difficult situation of public budgets, financial support for initiatives, e.g. to employ support staff, is shortening, which renders work increasingly difficult for many initiatives. Existing structures are being reduced and activities tend to be carried on under an increasingly short time horizon and in the manner of one-off campaigns. A challenge therefore consists in developing new, innovative structures and finding new sources of finance. The concept of participative local budgeting, which means that citizens get involved in decisions on where to direct public spending, seems to be a promising approach to a more democratic structure of municipal finance.

In many cases, it is even possible to earn money from projects for sustainability. A number of best-practice examples demonstrate how environmental concerns can be effectively combined with economic gain as well as social goals. For instance, energy saving measures carried out at schools have led to saving sums amounting to millions of Euro. In Gelsenkirchen, a “pupils’ energy race” was organised where parents and sponsors gave an agreed amount of money for every round the pupils ran. This money was used to support solar energy projects locally as well as abroad. In Hamburg, the initiative “climate protection and labour” achieved to integrate long-term unemployed persons through a programme for improving the energy-efficiency of buildings.

A major challenge for local authorities is to establish sustainability aspects as a cross-cutting issue in all policy areas. To achieve this, the local administration of Berlin, for instance, established a senate working group composed of representatives of all departments and the mayor’s office. The fact that sustainability is not yet integrated as a leading idea becomes obvious, for instance, in the allocation of financial resources. The financing of infrastructure is an outstanding example in this respect. The issue is often discussed, but in practice transport and infrastructure policy still remains entirely separated from the sustainability debate and the Agenda 21 process. It would be necessary to re-define the leading principles and objectives of all departments according to sustainability criteria. However, the suggestion to introduce a “coefficient for sustainability” into assessment procedures, e.g. in the context of public calls for tender, remains disputed: It can be doubted that a matter as complicated as sustainability can be adequately expressed with a few figures. In July 2003 *Agenda-Transfer* presented “Indicators for local sustainability” which were the result of a consultation process among a great variety of institutions and organisations. However, local authorities in part remain sceptical towards the use of indicators: The higher degree of transparency they bring about bears the risk that failure to achieve certain goals also becomes more obviously documented to the public.

Local authorities may take different roles in initiating and implementing projects. In some instances, the local administration itself took the initiative (e.g. to launch an Agenda 21 process), but often an external impulse was necessary. Local authorities have a potentially important function to motivate citizens and businesses for the Agenda process. For instance, one could conceive of a campaign to honour voluntary engagement (“Hero of Sustainability”?). An initiative that comes close to this idea is the prize awarded by the organisation “Active Citizenship” (*Aktive Bürgerschaft*), which is sponsored by an association of cooperative banks (*Bundesverband der Deutschen Volksbanken und Raiffeisenbanken*).

The same organisation also maintains an internet portal that informs small and medium-sized enterprises about the benefits of the concept of “corporate citizenship”<sup>5</sup>.

Local authorities could, and should, take a greater role, which includes officially supporting Agenda initiatives, e.g. by a formal decision of the local administration. Municipalities can also provide fora for exchange and networking and for “change management”. Support by regional governments (federal states) is also essential.

## **4 Practice section I: Local/regional business networks for sustainability**

### **Sustainable services in the Heidelberg region – the example of the umwelt.plus.karte („eco.plus.card“)**

*Gerd Scholl, Institute for Ecological Economy Research (Institut für ökologische Wirtschaftsforschung, IÖW)*

The Heidelberg *umwelt.plus.karte* („eco.plus.card“) is the result of a pilot project on sustainable consumption sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. This project has been scientifically supported by the Institute for Ecological Economy Research and backed by many local actors within the framework of local Agenda 21. The leading idea is that the client, for an annual fee of 15 Euro, can obtain a 3-10% rebate on his/her purchases from the participating businesses. From the clients' point of view, this bonus card fulfils a double function, serving as a “sustainability compass” as well as a monetary incentive. The clients differ in their motivation to use the card, depending on factors such as age. While money-saving is a central motive for the younger clients, ecologically responsible shopping and strengthening regional structures is more important for the older clients. Most of the clients belong to the “classical” eco-consumer milieu. 3/4 are women, many of them with children and a high degree of education. The most represented class of age is 35-49.

At present, it is still difficult to measure the benefits for the participating companies. Customers did become increasingly attached to them, but this effect was not very strong. Nevertheless, businesses showed a high level of genuine interest and strongly identified themselves with the aims of the project. A number of them spontaneously the project managers to express their interest in participating.

Professional marketing and market research has been an essential factor of success. A focus group analysis was carried out at the start of the project in order to fine-tune its design. Publicity for the *umwelt.plus.karte* is mainly financed through selling advertising space in the project's own newsletter. In the beginning, 80 per cent of the project costs were funded by the Ministry of Education and Research; at present, the organisation “Ökostadt Rhein-Neckar” (“Eco-city Rhine-Neckar”) provides financial support from its own resources. It is still unclear if the scheme will be able to finance itself in the long run.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.corporate-citizen.info> (in German only)



In considering if and how the concept can be transferred to other cities, one has to bear in mind the specific features of Heidelberg: It is a relatively small city with a quite untypical population structure (e.g. many students) and a municipal administration actively engaged in the Agenda process. Nevertheless, a transfer to other cities is envisaged, and in the case of Ludwigshafen (a city situated nearby), it is already under way.

### **Eco-network Dortmund: new strategies for product use – the case of *ecomoebel***

*Dr. Werner Baumann, University of Dortmund*

The Eco-network Dortmund (*ÖkoNetzwerk Dortmund*) is an association of enterprises which offer environmentally sound products and services. It includes not only pure “eco-firms” but also enterprises where only a part of the product range is rated as environmentally favourable. The local administration does not financially support the Eco-network, but maintains a close cooperation with it. Within the frame of the network, *ecomoebel* offers products and services connected with the sustainable refurbishment and marketing of used furniture. Starting from this example, a range of factors can be identified which determine to which extent a project of this kind will be successful.

- A unique selling point is indispensable, which distinguishes the product in question from all comparable products. In the case of *ecomoebel*, each piece of furniture is examined for toxic components, a fact which attracts customer groups such as families with children who suffer from allergies.
- The furniture sold is both cheap and of high quality, i.e., among other but especially, fit for use. In addition, the concept leaves space for creativity, e.g. furniture decorated with graffiti which fits the taste of young people. In line with this, the marketing strategy of *ecomoebel* focuses on quality and originality. The attribute “eco”, however, is not put in the forefront, neither is there an emphasis on the fact that the goods sold are second-hand products. Particular attention is paid to the design of the showrooms which are spacious and bright instead of dark and musty. Once the products were also displayed in a highly frequented shopping mall; this was rendered possible by the local administration which, through its Agenda bureau, allowed the initiative to use the space free of charge.
- The use of classical marketing instruments has been a central prerequisite for success. Before the start of the project, a market analysis was conducted comprising extensive market surveys. In general, it appears essential that already in the developing phase of a concept, the potential interest from the side of the consumer be examined.
- The creation of events is an important element of marketing; in the context of the project, design competitions for schools were organised, which led to the pupils’ parents becoming aware of *ecomoebel*.
- Those responsible for the project are interconnected in a complex, non-hierarchical network structure; accordingly, there is no central power which could prescribe the overall direction of the project. Network projects of this type require a double marketing (or communication) strategy: first, directed outwards, at potential clients; and second, directed inwards at the project partners. From the point of view of the participants, a variety of motives comes together: While commercial interest is the main incentive for

part of them, others are more engaged because of social concerns such as creating jobs or providing socially underprivileged classes with good furniture. (It has to be noted that the latter objective has not been achieved; it appears that specifically this segment of the population strongly prefers buying new furniture, even if it is of low quality). In any case, it is important that project participants “believe in what they are doing”, in other words identify themselves with their occupation and the resulting products.

The project could not have worked without initial financial support by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. In particular, the professional marketing carried out at the beginning of the project could not have been paid for out of the participants’ own resources. Meanwhile, however, the project has come to be self-sustaining; it is primarily financed by a deduction from the catalogue price. The project’s economic success is clear: Turnover is increasing, jobs are secured. Other cities are interested in taking up the concept. It is also planned to translate the scheme to the area of clothing under the label of “ecomode.de” (“eco-fashion”). Future research projects could raise potentials in further areas (e.g. sustainable mobile phones).

### **Eco-Partnership Hamburg**

*Dr. Kerstin Selke, Department of Civil Engineering and Environment, Federal State and City of Hamburg*

The Eco-Partnership Hamburg (*Umweltpartnerschaft Hamburg*) is a partnership between the City of Hamburg (represented by the First Mayor and the Senator of the Environment) and the local business community (represented by the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Crafts and Trade and the Industry Association). It was constituted in March 2003 and is designed to run for a period of five years. The partnership’s leading idea is to strengthen business’ responsibility through voluntary instruments. In exchange of voluntary environmental efforts, businesses are offered advantages such as simplified permit procedures and an improved service of information and advice.

Only those measures are supported that also pay off economically in the long run. As an example, DaimlerChrysler analyses its cost structure by applying a so-called internal company environmental index (“Betrieblicher Umweltindex”, BUX). With the aim of enhancing the BUX, the enterprise identifies potentials for reducing resource use. The identification of resource-saving potentials related to a company’s fleet of vehicles is another example. Pre-existing initiatives such as “Climate protection and labour” (see Chapter 3) were integrated into the Eco-Partnership. As for the instrumental dimension, the focus of the initiative currently lies on environmental management systems.

Professional marketing and public relation work has been a major factor of success. It is carried out not by the governmental press office, but by a private agency. It is necessary to create events in order to be noticed by the media. As an example, companies are awarded prizes for a sustainable firm policy and this news is combined with a portrait of the company in the local press. This not only provides publicity to the company in question, but also fosters local patriotism. It is planned to involve 2000 enterprises within the run-time of the initiative; at present, there are 197 participants, coming for the most part from the crafts and trade sector.

Cooperation and exchange of experience beyond the city borders is another essential element. This includes building networks with federal states situated nearby, such as Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, which also leads to including the wealthy areas surrounding Hamburg. An exchange also takes place with comparable initiatives of other federal states, such as the “Environmental Pact of Bavaria”.

## 5 Practice section II: Involving civil society

### The Munich “lifeguide” of the Community Foundation for a Sustainable Munich

*Dr. Klaus Kreuzer*

The basic idea of the Munich *lifeguide* is to gather all local offers of sustainable goods and services on one internet platform. The advantage for the user is to have one single reference point with continuously updated information instead of a host of leaflets that tend to be outdated soon. Additional background information is provided by the various thematic fora of the local Agenda initiative.

The *lifeguide* explicitly addressed different target groups, such as “home owners”, “quality-oriented”, “health-conscious” or “price-oriented” people. The need for a language accessible to all is emphasised. Regarding the topics chosen, the whole range of Agenda-21 issues is covered. Besides the various aspects of an environmentally sustainable lifestyle (e.g. in areas such as “food”, “energy”, “water”, “repair and second-hand”, “habitation and furnishing”), the *lifeguide* website also informs on social issues such as “engagement and participation”, “children and youth” or “one-world”. The internet platform is intended to be a tool to promote the following main goals:

- changing lifestyles in private households,
- reducing energy and water use as well as waste,
- strengthening the environmentally-oriented segments of the local economy,
- strengthening social contacts and promoting civic engagement.

In order to monitor progress with respect to these objectives and flesh out the elements of “contacts” and “engagement”, the concept includes interactive elements in addition to the mere supply of information. However, the interactive use options of the website do not yet work as well as it had been expected: Overall, little feedback came in and most part of it was of little interest. It is planned to constitute local groups in the different quarters of the city where participants can directly exchange experience made in their quest for a sustainable lifestyle.

It is possible to transfer the *lifeguide* to other cities based on a licence fee structure; some cities have already expressed their interest. Possibly the fee could be paid for by sponsors.

## **Local co-operations for international development**

*Anita Reddy, Service Agency "Communities in One World", InWEnt GmbH*

The Service Agency "Communities in One World" (*Servicestelle "Kommunen in der Einen Welt"*) was established in 2001 in order to support one-world activities of German municipalities. It is intended to be a contact point and service-provider for local authorities, non-governmental organisations, institutions and business, as well as media and interested individuals. The services offered include networking, information (e.g. on funding opportunities), advice and qualification. The agency also undertakes own initiatives, such as competitions, in order to strengthen civil-society engagement.

The agency belongs to *InWEnt – international training and development GmbH*, but it has its own administrative structure. Financial support is provided by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development as well as some federal states. Apart from the agency's mother organisation and sponsors, its advisory board includes representatives of local authorities' umbrella organisations, non-governmental organisations, private business, the German Confederation of Trade Unions and others.

One of the agency's main areas of work is to promote fair trade in connection with municipal procurement. The agency examines and informs on the scope of action that exists in this field within the current legal situation.

In the same way as other local projects for sustainability, local partnerships for development have a potential to improve the image of a municipality and to enhance citizens' identification with the community where they live. In addition, such partnerships bear the chance to direct, personal contact and exchange between north and south. Thereby, they fulfil an educational function in the sense of "intercultural learning" and enhance peoples' awareness of their personal responsibility. The moral appeal to act for global equity – e.g. by buying fair-trade products – loses its abstraction in becoming linked to positive associations and the experience of cooperative action.

## **Educational innovations in the context of local Agenda processes**

*Annette Dieckmann, German working group on nature and environmental education (ANU)*

The German working group on nature and environmental education (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Natur- und Umweltbildung, ANU*) represents more than 1000 very heterogeneous institutions in the field of non-scholar environmental education. Disseminating best practice and promoting cooperations are among the main tasks of ANU. Three initiatives can be cited as examples for innovative and cooperative learning approaches: the concept of *Lernorte-Netze* (networks of learning places), the project "environmental education centres and initiatives for sustainability as cooperation partners" (*Umweltzentren und Nachhaltigkeitsinitiativen als Kooperationspartner*) and the model of "service learning".

The leading idea of "Networks of learning places" is to create awareness of where the products we consume come from and how they are processed. For example:

- Under the headings of “from the field to the product” and “from the producer to the consumer”, a centre for nature education organises visits of school classes at an organic farm and at firms of the producing and processing industries.
- Under the heading of “life-cycle analysis”, data on energy and material use are analysed, e.g. for jeans, French fries, coffee, drinking water and paper. Where relevant, aspects of global equity are integrated in the analysis. Where possible, pupils also visit individual stages of the product cycle on the spot.

Within the framework of the BMU- and UBA-sponsored project “environmental education centres and initiatives for sustainability as cooperation partners”, cooperations between the mentioned institutions and other entities, e.g. businesses, are promoted. The project currently provides systematic support to the organisation and development of a pilot group of eight “tandems”. For example:

- The regional educational centre for sustainability REBINA of the otter protection initiative in Hankensbüttel cooperates with the Butting metal-processing company. The concept of a “learning region” which integrates sustainability into vocational training has been received very positively by the trainees.
- The Biological Station for the eastern Ruhr area in Herne advises the environmentally-oriented garden plot holders’ association “Kraut und Rüben” and organises public events. It is planned to complement this with an environmental education programme for schools.
- The Wengleinpark centre for conservation in Hersbruck provides advice to the regional initiative “Heimat auf’n Teller” (“homeland onto the plate”) set up by farmers and restaurant keepers, whose objective is to preserve the cultural landscape by increasing the use of regional products.
- The centre for environmental education of the city of Nuremberg cooperates with actors such as the local public transport system, stakeholder associations in the transport sector, teachers and the police in the context of the project “Pauk and Ride”<sup>6</sup>. Under the heading of “education for mobility”, the project aims at developing the capacity of children, youth and young adults to make an environment-friendly choice of the means of transport they use.

The concept of “service learning” is already common in the U.S. In short, it means to engage pupils in carrying out services that generate social and environmental benefits to the community.

## 6 Conclusions

The examples presented at the expert dialogue allow to draw a number of conclusions that concern the conditions for the success of a project and thereby also provide hints how to improve the situation.

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<sup>6</sup> The project’s name synthesises “Park and Ride” with “pauken”, which means “to swot”.

- A large variety of projects at local level related to sustainable production and consumption has developed in Germany.
- In this context, the cooperation of different institutions has proven to be a major factor of success.
- If initiatives are to gain a certain relevance, they need support and transfer of know-how. However, many of them still do not make sufficient use of existing service structures (e.g. Agenda agencies, consumer advice bureaux).
- Financial and logistical support from the local administration is a crucial factor, e.g. providing initiatives with rooms or possibilities for photo-copying. Local administrations have the chance to help initiatives reach a larger spectrum of the population if they manage to initiate successful cooperations with players from the business community and civil society. Official backing by prominent persons, e.g. the mayor, sends an important signal to the public.
- In a similar way, support by federal states' governments can considerably contribute to the success of a project.
- Where local businesses are envisaged as partners, it is crucial to give them the opportunity to draw economic benefits from the cooperation.
- It is often easier to get individual businesses engaged in cooperations than business associations. Nevertheless, backing by such organisations, which may occur only after a project has started successfully, can be very helpful.
- Qualification and professionalisation is indispensable and can usually only be achieved with the aid of external experts. Local administrations themselves often lack the capacity or the necessary know-how to effectively fulfil tasks such as fostering civic participation and taking up the results appropriately.
- The role taken by the local administration can vary considerably from one project to another. There are top-down projects where the initiative originates from the administration just as well as bottom-up projects that subsequently gain support from the official side. In general, however, projects are successful if they are backed by an open-minded administration and engaged citizens alike.
- In addition to promoters from above, initiatives need committed people who invest their personal resources into them, and grassroots groups (e.g. from environmental or consumers' organisations) who maintain projects and provide them with content.
- Spreading information on projects by public relations and marketing is a crucial factor.
- A project idea has to be marketable – it must fit the prevailing mood and the needs of the people. A thorough market analysis is essential in this respect. To this end, external support – as provided by the Ministry of Education and Research in the examples cited above – has proven extremely helpful.
- Within a project, a single contact point should be designated for outsiders as well as insiders.

The expert dialogue also revealed several options for further partnerships:

- The concept of the Munich “lifeguard” could be adapted by other cities or initiatives; some have already shown their interest. The same is valid for the “eco.plus.card”.
- The German federation of consumer advice bureaux firmly expressed its readiness to help establish contacts between initiators of projects and local/regional consumer advice bureaux.
- The concept of a “Sustainable Shopping Basket”, which was originally developed by the German Council for Sustainable Development, has been taken on by the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture. Now the concept needs to be further fleshed out and linked to the local level. The ministry offers to act as a partner in fulfilling these tasks.

## **7 Further prospects**

In addition to developing ideas on the transfer of some concepts, the expert dialogue has also contributed to widening the perspective of existing projects. Such an opening-up could result from merging together different approaches. For instance, the “lifeguard” concept could be combined with the “eco.plus.card”, or supply-oriented approaches such as the Eco-Partnership could be complemented by demand-oriented measures.

The expert dialogue has shown that there exists at local level a multitude of activities as well as potential starting points for further action. BMU and UBA offer to act as facilitators to support such initiatives. It is envisaged to set up an information hub where information on initiatives for sustainable consumption and production patterns is gathered and can be readily obtained. In specific cases it could also be possible to reinforce the financial support provided by other institutions.

The national dialogue process, which will now focus on discussing implementation steps along specific subjects and groups of actors, will be continued in the form of further expert dialogues. A second expert dialogue, which was dedicated to the subject of “Producing and marketing sustainable goods – Chances for small, medium-sized businesses and trade enterprises” already took place on September 24, 2004. In spring 2005, a first monitoring conference of the national dialogue process on sustainable consumption and production patterns will take place to assess the progress made during the first year of the process in implementing the Johannesburg commitment at national level.