



## **Strategic Workshop Transatlantic Environmental Relations**

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### **Summary**

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## 1 Background

On 15 December 2005 representatives from several transatlantic research institutes, think tanks and universities participated in the strategic workshop "Transatlantic Environmental Relations" hosted by Ecologic – Institute for International and European Environmental Policy<sup>1</sup> and the Robert Bosch Foundation<sup>2</sup>. The workshop took place at the Robert Bosch Foundation's office in Berlin. R. Andreas Kraemer, Ecologic's Managing Director, moderated the event.

The objectives of the workshop were to identify pressing environmental issues which bear upon the transatlantic partnership, to discuss ways to inject the identified issues into the overarching transatlantic debate, and to identify appropriate projects, partnership opportunities and steps for further action. With a view to the future, the workshop also sought to spur a multi-disciplinary dialogue aimed at identifying common interests and at promoting environmental issues.

Based on a background paper disseminated prior to the workshop, participants identified issues of importance to the transatlantic environmental agenda. Based on shared interests, three broad topical areas emerged: 1) energy security/ foreign policy/renewable energy; 2) religion/values/spirituality; and 3) communication/targets/transatlantic exchange. These topical areas formed the foundation for more detailed conversations, summarized below. It should be noted that the summary does not reference every topic mentioned, nor does it represent an exhaustive list of important transatlantic environmental issues.

## 2 Topic 1: Energy Security/Foreign Policy/Renewable Energy

The first session examined the following issues: energy security, foreign policy, renewable energy and energy efficiency. Apart from climate change, a substantial number of participants viewed energy security/policy as the primary transatlantic environmental issue presently facing the US and Europe. This suite of issues can be viewed from numerous perspectives: security of supply, diversification of import sources, integrity of installations, conservation, efficiency, renewable sources. Further, these issues involve a wide range of actors, including: national governments, foreign policy and national security experts, energy firms, environmental NGOs and citizen groups.

The discussion centered on the challenge of balancing security and economic interests with environmental concerns. Participants generally agreed that, despite divergent positions on certain issues, the US and Germany face a greater number of common challenges since both of their economies depend on a reliable supply of fossil fuels. Participants regarded this topical area as fertile ground for transatlantic partnerships and closer German-American ties.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ecologic.de/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bosch-stiftung.de/>

Several participants noted that, fundamentally, the US views energy as a security and an economic issue, whereas Germany takes an arguable more nuanced view, taking account of environmental considerations as well. Whereas US energy experts often advocate measures to secure access to energy sources like wellheads and natural gas pipelines, German policy makers advocate greater energy efficiency and diversification of energy supply. Conflicting philosophies can cause problems, but they also can signal opportunities for building consensus and sharing knowledge.

### Next Steps

Participants mentioned a variety of research issues and model examples:

- Security – partnership and research opportunities exist with regard to manner in which energy security interests are addressed: 1) at the source of traditional energy resources (US approach); 2) diversification of energy technology (EU approach); 3) global governance mechanisms; 4) energy efficiency;
- Life Style – research opportunities exist for determining the extent to which life style dictates energy policy, and thereby underpins, even if tacitly, discussions about energy security/policy;
- Technology Transfer – Ashoka<sup>3</sup> Fellow Fábio Rosa<sup>4</sup> has brought electricity to thousands of impoverished rural Brazilians by delivering affordable solar energy solutions<sup>5</sup>, demonstrating how the US and Germany can effect environmental progress through exchange of knowledge and technology;
- Assessment – research opportunities exist in determining the necessary preconditions for successful renewable or alternate energy projects;
- Hot spots – increasing competition among developed countries, Indiana and China also, over access to energy resource-rich areas like the Caspian Sea, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans, reveal tensions inherent in national energy policies as well as opportunities to engage in productive international and transatlantic dialogue over issues such as access, pricing, supply, use, conversation and innovation.

### 3 Topic 2: Religion/Values/Spirituality

Religion formed the nexus of the second session. Noting the important role that religion plays in the lives of millions of citizens in the EU and in particular in the US, several participants queried whether the environmental movement should attempt to emphasize common objectives. Questions raised included to what extent environmental principles are compatible with religious teachings, and whether religious organizations could contribute to raising awareness about environmental conditions.

Participants repeatedly mentioned that infusing religious doctrine with environmental themes could be an efficient and effective way of exposing a great number of individuals to environmental issues. One individual suggested religious institutions could play an

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ashoka.org/home/index.cfm>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ashoka.org/fellows/viewprofile3.cfm?reid=96996>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.changemakers.net/journal/300508-mosaic.cfm#rosa>.

influential role in casting the environmental movement as a quest for greater equality, social justice and ecological values, noting the role of churches in facilitating social movements like the abolition of slavery, the Civil Rights Movement in the US in the 1950s and 1960s, and the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. Another participant suggested addressing environmental themes from a religious context by focusing on stewardship of the earth. However, several participants worried that formal interaction between environmental interests and religious entities might result in religion coopting the environmental debate. The environmental element of the broader religious or social debate might become lost amid other priorities, religious leaders might cite environmental matters for strictly religious purposes. Others questioned the feasibility of incorporating religion given privacy concerns and the sensitivity of the subject matter.

Despite various logistical, strategic, social and political difficulties, the participants agreed the broad topic deserves further discussion and research to determine potential advantages relative to shortcomings.

## Next Steps

Participants discussed a variety of issues:

- Bilateral cooperation – closer cooperation between environmental and religious organizations could promote a natural blending of ideas, values and projects.
- Biodiversity – research the feasibility and strategic value of casting environmental degradation (esp. climate change) as a crime/transgression against God's biodiversity
- Greening conservatism – given the present ascendancy of the conservatist agenda throughout much of US politics, the historical role of conservative individuals in establishing the US National Park and Refuge system, and the current disconnect between the conservative agenda and the environment might be an issue for further analysis. Examining why conservative thought changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and exploring options for reanimating environmental considerations within it, could be of interest also. Comparing US and European conservative policies with regard to environmental issues could form a useful basis for enhancing the environmental component of both platforms.
- Technophobia/Technophilia – research the possible dichotomy between the popular attitude that equates technological advancement with societal progress, and religious doctrine that exhorts spiritually enlightened individuals to eschew material comforts; investigate options for encouraging religiously motivated individuals to assess the state of their material condition; examine ways to "green" technological innovation.
- Self Reliance – research the feasibility of selling the US public on renewable energy by refocusing the debate on self reliance and the US frontier spirit; the greater to which the US produces renewable energy, the less the nation, by implication its citizens, must depend on others for basic necessities.
- Players – consider the extent to which other players, such as religious organizations (churches, temples, mosques, etc.), youth organizations (religious, social, humanitarian, environmental) or religiously-affiliated colleges and universities, can contribute to fostering shared interests and values between religious and environmental objectives.

#### 4 Topic 3: Communication/Target groups/Transatlantic Exchange

The final session addressed issues of communication, methodology, targets and options for engaging in additional transatlantic environmental exchange. Numerous links between this category and the second session – for instance, the link between language and values; the process by which certain terms are deemed taboo; the difficulty of broaching environmental topics through the prism of religion – were noted. The participants generally agreed that transatlantic environmental relations could be improved by critically examining communication methods and language, identifying suitable target groups, maintaining or reviving current transatlantic links, and exploring ways to engage in transatlantic exchange. There was great diversity of comments and thematic areas.

Several comments related to the private sector. One focused on using trade shows<sup>6</sup> to showcase innovative concepts and products, expanding the participant and patron base at trade shows with environmental linkages. Another participant hailed the Transatlantic Outreach Program<sup>7</sup> - supporting US social studies teachers in the teaching of German culture and economy – funded by Deutsche Bank<sup>8</sup> in concert with several partners. Additional fruitful paths could involve the exchange of green industrial success stories or the fashioning of common transatlantic regulatory standards.<sup>9</sup>

Another suite of comments focused on so-called subnational activity in the US, actions taken by regions, states, municipalities and localities. A handful of states, for example, have voluntarily committed themselves to the Kyoto Protocol requirements. A growing number of grass roots and student-powered groups are putting increasing pressure on universities and local government to take measures to combat climate change. Exchanges through sister city programs or subnational transatlantic partnerships, such as the partnerships between Wisconsin and Bavaria, and New Jersey and the Netherlands, constitute attractive opportunities for knowledge exchange and mutual learning.

Toward the end of the session, participants identified several bottlenecks impeding environmental objectives, including: 1) profit reflex – where companies eschew proposed green production methods for fear such measures will erode profit margins; 2) advertising gap – leading advertising/entertainment channels, such as Madison Avenue and Hollywood, do not find it profitable to highlight environmental themes; 3) information gap – although quantitative data concerning the deleterious environmental effects of everyday lifestyle choices is becoming increasingly available, the data are not always readily accessible by the public at large, and certain topics require further development.

<sup>6</sup> CeBIT, with nearly 7,000 exhibitors, is one of the largest IT trade shows in the world.  
[http://www.cebit.de/homepage\\_d?x=1](http://www.cebit.de/homepage_d?x=1).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/prj10p/en107241.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.deutsche-bank.de/index\\_e.htm](http://www.deutsche-bank.de/index_e.htm); [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/laenderinfos/laender/laender\\_ausgabe\\_archiv?land\\_id=188&a\\_type=Press%20releases&arc\\_hiv\\_id=5888](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/laenderinfos/laender/laender_ausgabe_archiv?land_id=188&a_type=Press%20releases&arc_hiv_id=5888).

<sup>9</sup> The Wisconsin-Bavaria Regulatory Reform Working Partnership is a notable success.  
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/cea/bavaria/>.

## Next Steps

Participants discussed a variety of issues as next steps:

- Trade Shows – research options for greening certain trade shows;
- Kyoto Protocol exchange– foster dialogue between US-based voluntary Kyoto Protocol adherents and their counterparts in Germany and Europe;
- Sister City dialogue – encourage current sister cities to amplify the environmental content of their relationships and promote new sister city relationships featuring ambitious environmental objectives;
- Subnational partnerships – encourage additional subnational exchange between US and German individuals, agencies, firms and NGOs.



## 5 List of Participants

	Name	Institution
1	Benjamin Apple	KfW - IPEX Investment Bank / Robert Bosch Fellow
2	David Campbell	Ecologic / Robert Bosch Fellow
3	Matthew Collins	Ecologic
4	Michael Fenton	Ecologic
5	Jana Gebauer	Institute for Ecological Economic Research
6	Benjamin Görlach	Ecologic
7	Herbert Grieshop	British Council Germany
8	Nicole Harkin	Federal Ministry of the Interior / Robert Bosch Fellow
9	Jörg Himmelreich	The German Marshall Fund of the United States
10	Kirsten Jörgensen	Free University Berlin
11	Heather Kirschman	Institute for Ecological Economy Research / Robert Bosch Fellow
12	Markus Krigge	Ecologic
13	R. Andreas Kraemer	Ecologic
14	Sascha Müller-Kraenner	Heinrich Böll Foundation
15	Kimberly Ochs	Ashoka Germany, Inc. / Robert Bosch Fellow
16	Eberhard von Rottenburg	Federal Association of the German Gas and Water Industries
17	Sam Shiroff	Bellagio Forum for Sustainable Development