

Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.)

Developing Successful Sustainability Strategies

Impulses for a Sustainable North Rhine-Westphalia



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North Rhine-Westphalia

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Introduction

Andreas Esche

Objectives and components of the project

The Bertelsmann Stiftung's project "Developing Successful Sustainability Strategies" pursues the objectives of identifying best practices for sustainability strategies within Germany and elsewhere, sharing them with the various German federal states and transferring them as models to the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) and possibly to other states (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013-1 and 2013-2).

Sustainability strategies can be defined as coordinated, participatory and iterative processes which aim to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives in a balanced and integrated manner (UN DESA 2002: 1). It is political sustainability strategies at the regional level which form the focal point of this project; nonetheless, strategies at the national and supranational level are also analyzed.

The term "best practices" refers to models which – when measured against the general definition of sustainability strategies and also compared with the cases in question – stand out as particularly effective (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013-1: 13–14). Where possible, best practices should feature a clearly formulated objective, defined audience and an implementation plan that has been successfully carried out, or at least has the capacity for success (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013-2: 22).

The project is supported by NRW's Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Agriculture, Conservation and Consumer Protection (MCPEACCP). The sustainability strategy for the state of NRW is currently undergoing development. The plan is that a sustainability

strategy be prepared by late 2015 – incorporating actors from civil society, business, local authorities and academia (MKULNV 2013).

- The first phase was devoted to identifying and analyzing best practices. It entailed an analysis of existing sustainability strategies and processes in Germany (at both the state and federal level) as well as the EU.
- In the second phase, an interstate panel of experts presented the best practice models. The selected best practice models were then transferred to the state of NRW. To this end, topic-specific discussion papers were generated in the framework of a participatory process.
- The third phase has focused on evaluating the project and deriving success factors for the development or advancement of sustainability strategies.

An analysis of sustainability strategies has been ongoing since 2013. The interstate panel of experts was set up in early 2013 and has convened at six-month intervals since then. The discussion papers for NRW's sustainability strategy were published in late 2014. The evaluation is planned for the first half of 2015, with the project scheduled to conclude in mid-2015.

Discussion papers for a sustainable NRW

Each discussion paper developed in 2014 for the NRW sustainability strategy focuses on a specific topic and contains a description of the relevant issues and challenges facing NRW. These papers also identify good practices found in Germany and elsewhere as well as specific solution-oriented approaches. The intended recipients of these discussion papers are the relevant ministries at the state level along with other stakeholders with expertise in the area.

Discussion papers were developed for the following issues: “Sustainable Consumption among Children and Youth – Building Competence,” “Sustainable Participation among Older Generations – Vol-

unteering at Any Age” and “Sustainable Budget Policymaking during a Debt Brake – Consolidating Correctly.” The issues were derived from the topical areas agreed upon at the outset of the project by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the MCPEACCP:

- The issue of “Sustainable Consumption” was derived from the topical area “Sustainable Business,” and takes a closer look at the target group of children and youth as well as issues of consumer competence.
- The issue of “Sustainable Participation,” derived from the topical area “Social Participation,” looks more closely at the target group of older people as well as social engagement.
- The issue of “Sustainable Budgetary Policy” was derived from the topical area “Sustainable Financial Policy,” and focuses on the legislative framework for the debt brake as well as the issue of state budget consolidation.

The purpose of these discussion papers is to present concrete solution-oriented approaches for a sustainability strategy and to incorporate these into NRW’s sustainability strategy. It should be noted that this list of issues makes no claim to completeness. Rather, the aim is to target certain critical points that can help facilitate sustainable development at the state level. For this reason, the solution-oriented approaches should – as the project develops – be placed in a broader context and complemented by additional measures. The good practices from which the solution-oriented approaches were derived may well provide inspiration for further proposals. In any case, solution-oriented approaches must be supplemented with objectives or indicators as well as detailed action plans in the course of strategy development.

The good practices are not, as a rule, drawn from NRW. Certainly the state can boast a wide range of good practices (in the form of model projects, for instance) which could be consolidated or scaled up within the framework of a sustainability strategy. However, in order to drive forward the discussion within NRW, the discussion papers have been designed to concentrate on solution-oriented approaches found

outside the state. Some of the models from Germany and elsewhere are drawn from studies generated in the initial phase of the project. Other models were drawn from new research conducted in light of the specific issues defined.

Where possible, the problems or challenges facing sustainable development in NRW are depicted using sources from recognized institutions.

The discussion papers are structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 provides a brief summary of the core content of the discussion paper.
- Chapter 2 addresses the issue more closely. First, the overarching issue is defined and then the first set of parameters is set, explained and placed in the context of a basic causal model. Finally, a specific impact area is marked out for closer inspection.
- Chapter 3 provides a picture of current conditions in NRW as they relate to the focus issues. The point here is to draw on concrete figures, data and facts in order to establish the baseline, describe current activities and define those areas requiring that action be taken in NRW.
- Chapter 4 presents good practices identified in Germany and elsewhere. These are arranged according to the following criteria matrix: Name – State/Region – Objective – Target audience – Implementation – Capacity – Source.
- Chapter 5 offers solution-oriented approaches for NRW that are drawn from the domestic and international models developed for Chapter 4 and that have the potential to at least partially close the gaps identified in Chapter 3.

The process of preparing the discussion papers was broken down into five steps:

- For the first step (up to April 2014), the first drafts of the discussion papers were developed with commentary provided by a project panel made up of Mona Treude (Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy), Dr. Klaus Jacob (Free University Berlin), Prof. Dr. Harald Heinrichs (Leuphana University Lüneburg),

Yves Michels (PricewaterhouseCoopers AG auditing company), and Dr. Marc-Oliver Pahl (NRW Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Agriculture, Conservation and Consumer Protection).

- In the second step (up to May 2014), the first draft of each discussion paper was discussed and further developed by an issue-specific focus group. These focus groups are generally comprised of individual representatives from the NRW government, local authorities, civil society, business and academia.
- In the third step (up to July 2014), the second drafts of the discussion papers were developed with the project panel again providing commentary. This also took the results of the focus group sessions into consideration.
- In the fourth step (up to October 2014), a representative survey based on the core content of the discussion papers was conducted by infas (Institute for Applied Social Sciences).
- For the fifth step (up to November 2014), the final version of each discussion paper was developed, with the project panel once again offering commentary. These finalized discussion papers also reflected the results of the representative survey.

Responsibility for the development of the discussion papers lies with the Bertelsmann Stiftung. The project panel acted in an advisory capacity. Together, the focus groups and the representative survey represent the main survey components within the context of the overall process.

In addition to the three discussion papers on sustainable consumption, sustainable participation and sustainable budgets, a fourth discussion paper on the further development of child and youth participation in state-level sustainability strategies was developed in cooperation with the states of Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia. The methodology, process and results of this sub-project are presented in the contribution by Prof. Dr. Roland Roth of the Magdeburg-Stendal Technical College at the end of this publication.

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Sustainable Consumption among Children and Youth – Building Competence

Henrik Riedel

Germany's North Rhine-Westphalia is moving forward in developing a comprehensive sustainability strategy. This discussion paper, which draws on good practices identified in Germany and elsewhere, is designed to facilitate the development of a solution-oriented strategy with regard to consumption.

Consumption is sustainable when the use of products and their negative impact on the economy, environment and society is minimized as much as possible. Although there are many groups responsible for the cultivation of sustainable consumption (e.g., consumers, producers, the media, consumer organizations, state and municipal administrative bodies), individual consumer behavior plays a unique role here. Consumer behavior among children and youth is a considerable factor, as they represent an important consumer group whose consumption patterns and lifestyles will have an impact on future generations. To be sure, children and youth also affect consumption patterns in their families, among their friends, at the schools they attend and elsewhere. The extent to which consumption among children and youth (just like among adults) is sustainable depends on several factors. Attitudes, competencies/skills, incentives and information each play a role, as does the extent to which suitable sustainability products are available and the context in which they are made available. This paper focuses on the consumption competencies of children and youth because their socialization is still underway. This means they are particularly open to educational measures, and consumer awareness at their phase of development is likely to have a pos-

itive effect on other factors. Finally, education is the responsibility of the state and consumer education offers the state of NRW a good starting point from which to launch its sustainability strategy.

It is difficult to establish the extent to which consumption among children and youth is sustainable, not least because there are to date no broadly accepted indicators of sustainable consumption. For the purposes of this paper, we must therefore rely on so-called ancillary indicators. In any case, it appears there is considerable need to develop and strengthen consumer competence among children and youth. Whereas they are adept at handling new media, their skills in managing and understanding other areas such as finances, nutrition, data protection and consumer rights are underdeveloped. Aiming to cultivate consumer competence, the state of NRW has developed a number of activities for use in finance and nutrition education. Further action must be taken, however, in terms of developing a strategy for educating children and youth about sustainable consumption and implementing this strategy within schools and elsewhere.

With regard to consumer education, there are several cases of good practices being applied in Germany and elsewhere that could be used in developing the approach for NRW. In Austria, for example, a web portal targeting sustainable consumption has been created. Austria has also launched a state-level initiative that aims to anchor sustainability in schools and everyday life. Both the United Kingdom and Australia have introduced initiatives designed to improve schoolchildren's finance competencies. The "Think twice!" initiative backed by the Swedish government focuses on consumer education. Drawing on these and other examples, three approaches have been developed for NRW:

- Develop a strategy for educating children and youth about sustainable consumption;
- Support the use of instructional materials on sustainable consumption;
- Support the establishment of educational partnerships for sustainable consumption between schools and other organizations.

Between September 1 and 23, 2014, the market research institute infas conducted a telephone survey in North Rhine-Westphalia on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung. The survey is representative of German-speaking residents of NRW 18 years or over who live in private households with landline connections. A total of 1,000 people were surveyed, with interviews lasting an average of 15 minutes. The questions addressed general topics, such as the importance of sustainable state policies and the greatest problems facing state policy in NRW, as well as specific topics, such as sustainable consumption by children and youth.

The results show that nine out of ten respondents believe it is very important or somewhat important that NRW's state policies be guided by the principles of sustainability. Among the most frequently mentioned problem areas that policy in NRW should do more to address were "education, childcare" (36%), "infrastructure" (20%), "poverty" (10%), "energy supply" (9%), "health, nursing" (8%) as well as "public debt" (6%); multiple responses were permitted. The subject matter of the discussion paper "Sustainable Consumption among Children and Youth – Building Competence" points to overlap with the areas of "education," "child care," "environmental impact" and "climate change" and as such addresses an issue that residents regard as important.

Questions regarding sustainable consumption specifically yielded the following results: only one in five believe that children and youth today pay more attention than previous cohorts to whether or not purchased items are produced with social and environmental impact in mind. In other words, respondents see little improvement in the purchasing behavior of youth and children with regard to sustainability. However, opinions on this point differ among different age groups. Thirty-two percent of the 18- to 19-year-olds polled stated that today's children and youth are more sustainability-minded in their shopping than were earlier cohorts. Only 14 percent of 40- to 59-year-olds agree with this statement.

The responses to questions regarding factors influencing consumer behavior among children and youth can be summarized as follows: Some eight out of ten respondents assume that children and youth are either

heavily or very heavily influenced by their peers, what they read/see on-line and what is presented on television. Only 46 percent state that parents represent a strong influence. Again, 18- to 19-year-olds differ here, with 82 percent stating that parents have a strong or very strong influence on the purchasing decisions made by their children.

Each of the proposed measures were classified by more than 80 percent of the respondents as either highly appropriate or somewhat appropriate for raising awareness in schools about the social and environmental impact of goods produced. A whopping 89 percent consider visits to sustainable businesses a highly appropriate activity; 88 percent consider a school policy mandating the use of socially responsible and environmentally friendly products as highly appropriate; and 81 percent strongly support educators being provided training on the subject.

Sustainable Participation among Older Generations – Volunteering at Any Age

Henrik Riedel

The state of NRW is well on the way to developing a comprehensive sustainability strategy. This paper seeks to provide further impetus for sustainable development in the area of participation. The solution-oriented approaches proposed here are based on good practices found both in Germany and elsewhere.

For participation to remain sustainable, it must encompass all social groups, including people of different ages and those confronted with particular problems. Sustainable participation can occur in any relevant area, including the political, economic, cultural and social arenas. Finally, sustainable participation also contributes, either directly or indirectly, to sustainable development – economic, environmental and particularly social. The sustainable participation of older people is of particular significance, because as current demographic developments unfold, this group will increase in both relative and absolute terms, and the potential for involvement of older people will increase alongside this quantitative development. We should therefore regard aging not so much as a risk but as an opportunity for society, particular in the realm of civic engagement. The degree to which older people participate depends on the extent and intensity of their political, economic, cultural, social and other forms of participation. This paper aims to put the focus squarely on participation in the social domain, because it offers major opportunities that remain relatively unexplored in comparison to political, economic and cultural participation. Indeed, social participation has a positive impact on all other areas of participation. Finally, state actors have

the capacity to create the framework needed in the social domain. They can also promote measures and provide the impetus for further development.

In NRW, it is the social domain in which older people are the most intensively engaged. However, recently the overall rate of involvement among senior citizens has dropped slightly. The senior policy activities of the state of NRW cover a wide diversity of issues. This includes the support of senior representation, community-oriented senior work, voluntary work as well as age-specific municipal and local housing developments. However, there is still work to be done in tapping the potential willingness among senior citizens to become involved, improving the participation of all social groups (including, for example, older foreign-born people, migrants and older people with disabilities) and fostering the participation of older people in urban areas, and in terms of developing a comprehensive, transparent and participatory strategy for strengthening social participation of older people.

A range of good examples from both Germany and elsewhere highlights ways of promoting social participation. In Austria, the state of Upper Austria has set up the “Unabhängiges LandesFreiwilligenzentrum” (ULF, tr.: Independent State Volunteer Center). Berlin has seen the establishment of the “Kompetenz Zentrum Interkulturelle Öffnung der Altenhilfe” (komzen, tr.: “Intercultural Opening of Aged Assistance Skill Center”). The German states of Bavaria and Saxony have developed programs to support senior cooperatives. And in France, as well as in Germany and other countries, there are compelling concepts for intergenerational residential communities. Taking these examples as a basis, the following three solution-oriented approaches were identified for NRW:

- Establishment and operation of a coordination point for the participation of older people;
- Development of a program to support innovative models of mutual assistance;
- Promotion of intergenerational residential communities.

Between September 1 and 23, 2014 the market research institute infas conducted a telephone survey in North Rhine-Westphalia on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung. The survey is representative of German-speaking residents of NRW 18 years or over who live in private households with landline connections. A total of 1,000 people were surveyed, with interviews lasting an average of 15 minutes. The questions addressed general topics, such as the importance of sustainable state policies and the greatest problems facing state policy in NRW, as well as specific topics, such as the sustainable participation of older people.

The results show that nine out of ten respondents believe it is very important or somewhat important that NRW's state policies be guided by the principles of sustainability. Among the most frequently mentioned problem areas that policy in NRW should do more to address were "education, childcare" (36%), "infrastructure" (20%), "poverty" (10%), "energy supply" (9%), "health, nursing" (8%) as well as "public debt" (6%); multiple responses were permitted. The subject matter of the discussion paper "Sustainable Participation among Older Generations – Volunteering at Any Age" points to overlap with the areas of "unemployment," "poverty" and "health, nursing" and as such addresses an issue that residents regard as important.

The survey included questions specific to this issue such as how important it is that older people with lower German-language skills are able to engage in the social arena, how important it is that older people with lower German-language skills are offered multilingual information, who should be responsible for providing this information, and the suitability ascribed to the above-mentioned measures.

That older people with lower German-language skills are able to engage in the social arena was regarded as important by nine out of ten respondents. Younger respondents were unanimous, with 100 percent of the opinion that it is very important or somewhat important that older people with lower German-language skills engage in the social arena.

Supplying information on opportunities for the social engagement of older people, not just in German but in other languages as well, was

regarded as important by eight out of ten respondents. Of the younger respondents, 97 percent attached a high importance to supplying multi-lingual information on opportunities for engagement.

The respondents tended to ascribe responsibility for supplying this information to charitable organizations, initiatives and working groups (90%), the state government (80%) or the federal government (68%).

The proposed measures for increasing the participation of older people with lower German-language skills (as one of the target groups of the inclusive participation concept) were each classified by more than 80 percent of the population as highly appropriate or somewhat appropriate. The financial support of projects and organizations in which seniors are able to offer each other mutual assistance was regarded by 93 percent of the respondents as highly appropriate or somewhat appropriate; for the financial support of residential communities combining older and younger people the figure was 85 percent; for the financing of a central facility to coordinate support measures for the social engagement of older people, the figure was 81 percent.

Sustainable Budget Policymaking during a Debt Brake – Consolidating Correctly

Henrik Riedel

The state of NRW is well on the way to developing a comprehensive sustainability strategy. This paper seeks to provide further impetus for sustainable development in the area of budgetary policy. The solution-oriented approaches proposed here are based on positive examples found both in Germany and elsewhere.

The sustainability of budgetary policy relies on the stability of public finances, meaning that the government's capacity to act and to meet its financial obligations are secured for the short, mid and long term. From an expanded economic perspective, sustainable budgetary policy can also contribute to sustainable economic development. In a holistic sense, sustainable budgetary policies contribute to the sustained development of the economy, as well as the environment and society. The constitutional provisions of the debt brake mean that it represents a pressing challenge for the budgetary policies of the federal government, but also the state governments. Complying with the debt brake requires consistent consolidation of governmental budgets. In particular, this paper seeks to investigate which institutional strategies might be developed to balance the budget in the state of NRW.

From an economic-fiscal point of view, the state of NRW is on the way to consolidating its budget in line with the debt brake. There is still further work to be done in order to reach the defined goals by 2020, when the debt brake comes into effect. After the cabinet decision on mid-term financial planning between 2014 and 2018, the net new debt will amount to 0.7 billion euros by 2018. Here it is the demo-

graphic transformation, economic development and the course of interest rates that represent considerable risks for sustainable budgetary policy.

There is a range of good examples for budgetary consolidation both in Germany and elsewhere – some of which were also enacted in a debt brake context. Some of Germany’s states have already incorporated state-specific provisions on the debt brake into their state constitutions or budgetary regulations. Switzerland already has more than a decade’s experience – at both the national and cantonal level – of achieving and complying with a balanced budget within the framework of a debt brake. The Canadian government’s successful budget consolidation in the 1990s presents another positive example. Finally, so-called social impact bonds – particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries – have developed into an innovative instrument which is also used for consolidating public finances. Using these examples as a basis, three solution-oriented approaches were identified for NRW:

- Anchoring the debt brake in state legislation;
- The state government developing a consolidation strategy;
- The state government implementing alternative financing instruments (using the example of social impact bonds).

Between September 1 and 23, 2014 the market research institute ifas conducted a telephone survey in North Rhine-Westphalia on behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung. The survey is representative of German-speaking residents of NRW 18 years or over who live in private households with landline connections. A total of 1,000 people were surveyed, with interviews lasting an average of 15 minutes. The questions addressed general topics, such as the importance of sustainable state policies and the greatest problems facing state policy in NRW, as well as specific topics, such as sustainable budgetary policies in the era of the debt brake.

The results show that nine out of ten respondents believe it is very important or somewhat important that NRW’s state policies be guided by the principles of sustainability. Among the most frequently mentioned

problem areas that policy in NRW should do more to address were “education, childcare” (36%), “infrastructure” (20%), “poverty” (10%), energy supply (9%), “health, nursing” (8%) as well as “public debt” (6%); multiple responses were permitted. The subject matter of the discussion paper “Sustainable Budget Policymaking during a Debt Brake – Consolidating Correctly” relates particularly to the topic of “public debt” but also – due to the cross-sectional nature of budgetary policy – points to overlap with all the other topics and as such addresses an issue that residents regard as important.

The questions addressing budgetary policy in particular showed the majority of respondents (55 %) stating that the state government should lower expenditure in the future to avoid accruing new debt. Only 14 percent of respondents expressed a preference for increasing income as a means of avoiding new debt. There was 22 percent approval for a blend of reduced expenditure and increased taxes as a means of avoiding new credit.

When considering the factors which influence North Rhine-Westphalia’s parliament in planning the state’s income and expenditure, respondents ascribed a very large or somewhat large influence to companies (75%), economic associations (74%) and the state government (71%). Exerting a comparatively low influence according to respondents are the parties (64%), unions (44%) and municipalities (34%).

The proposed measures for ensuring that NRW accrues no new debt from 2020 onward were each assessed by more than 40 percent of the population as highly appropriate or somewhat appropriate. The presentation of a comprehensive plan for reducing debt was regarded as highly appropriate or somewhat appropriate by 72 percent of respondents; 63 percent were in favor of anchoring the debt brake in state legislation, with private financing of social expenditure attracting an approval rate of 40 percent.

Impetus for Ongoing Development of Child and Youth Participation in the States' Sustainability Strategies

Roland Roth

Securing the support of children and youth for sustainability, addressing their prospects and enabling them to act responsibly for a future-ready society – these are the incontrovertible core ambitions of a successful sustainability policy. These goals require young people to be as comprehensively and effectively involved as possible in the development, implementation and evaluation of sustainability strategies. As various studies and surveys in the course of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's "Developing Successful Sustainability Strategies" project have shown, this has only been partially achieved to date.

This discussion paper offers a brief overview of the current state of child and youth participation in Germany in general, and on the topic of sustainability in particular. At the core of the study is the evaluation of discussion dialogs held in the first half of 2014 in five states (Baden-Württemberg, Brandenburg, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia and Thuringia), attended by representatives of youth councils and youth forums, youth associations and other actors in the area of sustainability, along with the relevant ministries. Despite this discursive approach, the following represents the writer's own evaluations and assessments.

Overall, it is apparent that there is a wealth of experience, ideas, approaches, projects and programs for the engagement of young people in sustainability policy, whereby the states in their federalist capacities use these in different ways. At the same time, there has only been partial success to date in securing the participation of children and youth in the widely acknowledged standards of sustainability

strategy. This applies particularly to participation in strategy development, vertical and horizontal integration, and to implementation as well as evaluation.

In the states themselves, but also in the national and international context, there are numerous promising approaches which offer concrete impetus for strengthening the voices and influence of young people in sustainability policy.

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