

International Peer Review 2018 of the German Sustainability Strategy

Stakeholder Survey

Regional Hubs for Sustainability Strategies

West – Central - South

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General Information	
Contact details (name and function)	Dr Klaus Reuter (RENN.west) Josef Ahlke (RENN.central) Gerd Oelsner (RENN.south)
Which stakeholder do you represent or belong to?	e) academia f) municipalities and associations n) grassroots initiatives or local agenda groups o) civil-society organisations
Have you sent in a contribution on the draft of the 2016 Sustainable Development Strategy?	No

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1. Background:

The Regional Hubs for Sustainability Strategies (RENNs) together pursue the objective set by the commissioning body of promoting and intensifying the networking of civil-society activities relating to national, regional and local sustainability strategies (Leitlinien für die Zusammenarbeit der RENN-Leitstelle mit den RENN-Stellen, March 2016).

The German Sustainability Strategy (DNHS) was revised comprehensively in 2016. The RENNs were introduced at that time and other additions were made to the architecture for ongoing development and implementation of the sustainability objectives. In addition, a knowledge platform and a civil-society Sustainability Forum (Forum Nachhaltigkeit) were set up. When the DNHS was revised, the global sustainability goals were incorporated into it; this incorporation process also took place in the *Länder* of North-Rhine/Westphalia and Saarland.

To establish the RENNs, the state chancelleries and the *Länder* ministries responsible for sustainability were asked by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) to nominate effective civil-society partners in the *Länder* that would set up networks in the north, south, west and central regions, each managed by a consortium leader. A total of 20 organisations are now involved in managing the regional hubs. Each hub has drawn up its own project applications; the projects that have been approved will run until 2021. In addition, a RENN Coordination Centre has been set up at the RNE. The RENNs have been in operation since the start of 2017.

In some respects, establishment of the RENNs takes place against a favourable background since in recent years not only the Federal Chancellery and the RNE but also a number of federal ministries have been considering what a sustainable development process should involve and how implementation of it should be organised. These ministries need to be consulted and coordinated as part of the RENN's work. For example, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is pursuing the 'Future City' programme for municipalities and implementing the 'Education for Sustainable Development' action platform; the Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMUB) has set up an interministerial working group on urban development (IMA Stadt) to consider implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the outcomes of Habitat III, and BMZ – via the organisation Engagement Global gGmbH and the service agency Communities in One World – provides municipal and civil-society actors with a variety of services in connection with implementation of the 2030 Agenda that also support the DNHS.

2. Challenges and opportunities

The RENNs have various priorities, which include supporting the transfer of knowledge relating to the DNHS, operating as a network for implementation of sustainability strategies at federal level, supporting cooperation partners, creating impetus, contributing to implementation of the SDGs, supporting sustainable development structures and providing input that helps to shape policy.

Each RENN brings together actors that have very different experiences of the development and implementation of sustainability strategies or of working on different aspects of a sustainable development process with various stakeholders in their *Land*. This ensures that across all the *Länder* in the RENN high levels of expertise in sustainable development issues are available and can be called on in connection with continuing development of the DNHS, the *Länder* strategies and implementation of the SDGs. Each partner's contribution to the exchange of knowledge involves what may be very specific network actors or new civil-society players that have not previously been formally organised. At the same time, the actors are involved in a very wide range of working groups, advisory boards and competition juries at national or *Land* level into which they incorporate the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the DNHS.

A variety of event formats, awards in the 'Project Sustainability' competition, the German Sustainability Action Days and the RENNs' focus on specific issues all contribute to familiarising a wider range of actors with the DNHS goals, promoting critical discussion of these goals and generating concrete proposals for further development and implementation. These discourse outcomes also make an important contribution to vertical integration of a sustainable development process, as harmonisation with the strategies of the *Länder* and municipalities can take place.

This process involves extensive coordination within the RENNs because the outcomes of the discourse processes must be pooled and analysed in the individual *Länder* and for each RENN before they can be fed into the relevant processes. As part of this coordination it is particularly important to highlight conflicts of objectives in the previous strategies and identify solution pathways across all federal levels. In the RENNs' work to date it has become clear that the pressure to implement the sustainability goals has increased significantly. As a result of adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, the global guardrails provide additional impetus for discussion and implementation processes.

For this reason it is proposed that the different participation formats of the sustainability architecture should be given a stronger mandate and also be coordinated with each other in order to ensure that the objectives are achieved faster and more effectively. It must be clear to each of the actors involved what contributions they are expected to make, how these contributions are to be transparently utilised and how the results are to be mandatorily incorporated into implementation of the objectives. It is also necessary to clarify how the initiatives of the individual federal or *Land* ministries that we regard as positive can be better coordinated with each other, since from the point of view of both research promotion and concrete implementation on the ground there is scope here for better interlocking of opportunities to fund investment and build human capacity.

The establishment of the RENNs provides a major opportunity to bring together extremely diverse actors from the civil-society and municipal spectrum for the purpose of implementing the DNHS, generating and transmitting knowledge and contributing as independent networks to a strong sustainability process in Germany.

3. Regional Hubs for Sustainability Strategies

3.1. RENN.west

3.1.1. The work of RENN.west

The work of RENN.west is geared to the German Sustainability Strategy (DNHS), the sustainability strategies of the *Länder* and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. We pursue an interdisciplinary, vertical approach. Our strength lies in the networking of actors with experience of different issues across a variety of levels. Through dialogue and discourse formats with different target groups we promote the exchange of knowledge in relation to sustainability strategies, network stakeholders, develop and discuss strategies for implementing a sustainable development process at local, regional and national level, combine positions and incorporate them into the political debate. We hope that this will help to strengthen the DNHS and the *Länder* strategies and contribute to their further substantive refinement.

In our first year's work at RENN.west we have organised events at which we have introduced the revised version of the DNHS and focused in particular on the issues of 'education/education for sustainable development', 'land use', 'consumption and production', 'mobility' and important structural questions relating to the DNHS (policy coherence and the target and indicator system). In order to build up our own knowledge and prepare appropriately for events, we undertook a systematic comparison of the strategies that enables us to identify best practices and specific opportunities for further development of the strategies and tools for implementing them. This demonstrates the advantage of the RENNs' independent way of working, which enables them to explore different structural conditions in the *Länder* in a flexible manner and decide which approaches are most appropriate to the situation in each *Land*. Work also focused on involving new stakeholders in the networks and on implementing the German Sustainability Strategy as a joint undertaking.

3.1.2. Cooperation with *Länder*, municipalities and civil-society actors

RENN.west is in trusting and constructive dialogue with representatives of the state chancelleries and the ministries responsible for the strategy of each *Land*. A special body ('partner group') was set up to facilitate knowledge transfer and the exchange of information on activities in the *Länder* and in national bodies and to support RENN.west in an advisory capacity.

In all the *Länder* the organisations behind RENN.west and RENN.west itself are involved in key advisory bodies relevant to the (further) development of particular sustainability strategies and indicator systems.

Another positive outcome is the fact that the collaborative work of RENN.west is also boosting cooperation with various *Land* ministries and enhancing the support provided by them. For example, in Rhineland-Palatinate (RLP), cooperation with the Sustainability Department of the RLP Ministry of Economic Affairs on networking sustainability stakeholders and establishing participatory structures for further development of the RLP sustainability strategy has been initiated and is due to come into effect in 2018. In Hesse RENN.west is involved in the task force that is considering the indicators and objectives of the sustainability strategy. In North-

Rhine/Westphalia (NRW), Germanwatch and the regional Agenda 21 working group in NRW (LAG 21 NRW) have for many years been members of the Sustainability Team and the Sustainability Forum linked to the NRW sustainability strategy. In addition, funding from the NRW Ministry for the Environment, Agriculture, Nature and Consumer Protection (MULNV NRW) has secured the networking function of LAG 21 NRW for municipalities and civil-society stakeholders until 2020. In December 2017 the Environmental Campus Birkenfeld and the Saarland Ministry of the Environment and Consumer Protection signed a cooperation agreement under which the Environmental Campus Birkenfeld will advise the Ministry on implementation of the Saarland sustainability strategy and there will be close collaboration on achievement of the aims of RENN.west.

The municipal level is crucial to the work of the RENN, because municipalities are a key level in implementation of a sustainable development process. Since the start of 2016, as part of the project 'Globally sustainable municipalities in NRW', the development of integrated sustainability strategies has therefore been pursued with fifteen municipalities in bodies composed of representatives from the fields of policy-making, local government and civil society on a parity basis. A similar project has been launched in Saarland (SL) under the auspices of the Institute for Applied Material Flow Management (ifas) at the Environmental Campus Birkenfeld. In RLP and Hessen (HE) municipalities are regarded as a key action level and their involvement in the activities of the network is actively sought. In Hessen, for example, RENN.west cooperates with the seven regional Education for Sustainable Development networks, via which a wide range of stakeholders involved in sustainable development in their region discuss, develop and implement innovative ideas.

The close cooperation between the *Länder* of Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland is rated as very positive. The sustainability strategies of the two *Länder*, which differ widely in their structure and mode of formation, provide an example of the added value that arises from cooperation. Comparison of the strategies and sustainability architecture of the two *Länder* creates opportunities to develop the strategies further and if necessary improve the implementation mechanisms.

Through our events we have been able to access the extended networks of all the organisations involved in RENN.west. In addition, we have been able to draw in new stakeholders (including companies, initiatives involved in social innovation, cultural stakeholders, banks involved in sustainable financing, etc.). We have found civil-society stakeholders involved in the networking activities to be very curious about RENN.west and interested in cooperating with it. However, educating the diverse target groups about the profile and objectives of the RENN remains a challenge, because the priorities and modes of operation of the RENN hubs vary across the country, sometimes very widely. In addition, many stakeholders are sceptical about networking activities without a clear mandate. There is great interest in being involved in further development of the DNHS and working for effective implementation of it. However, they want this to be governed by binding rules and procedures.

3.1.3. Differing structural conditions in the *Länder*

HE, NRW, RLP and SL all have sustainability strategies but they vary – sometimes widely – in their mode of formation, priorities, structures, hierarchical links, target and indicator systems and implementation instruments. For example, NRW and SL have regional sustainability strategies that already link to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and can be used for the work of the RENN. Opportunities for civil-society stakeholders to obtain funding, for example from foundations, likewise differ between *Länder*.

Civil-society involvement in strategy development and implementation is handled differently in the various *Länder*. The *Land* sustainability strategies of HE, NRW and SL have been developed in direct cooperation with civil society. However, there is wide variation in the formats and structures developed for this purpose and hence similar variation in the influence that civil-society stakeholders can exert. In all *Länder* it is desirable to establish civil-society advisory councils or to position existing advisory councils in such a way that they can be involved in working on the strategies on the basis of binding rules and with a clear mandate. Similarly, a long-term goal for RENN might be to set up – in all the *Länder* – civil-society competence centres for sustainability strategies that could focus far more strongly on the specifics of the sustainability strategies and existing structures in the *Länder*.

3.1.4. Successful examples of our action to date

At the events that we have organised for a *Land* or group of *Länder* we have presented the revised version of the DNHS to a wide range of stakeholders, highlighted its relevance to sustainable development and discussed issues of content and structure. Some of the proposals for further development of the DNHS that have emerged from this discussion are attached to this paper (see **Annex 1**).

3.2. RENN.central

3.2.1. The work of RENN.central

Taking as its starting point the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and the German Sustainability Strategy (DNHS) 2017, the team at RENN.central aims to contribute – especially at municipal and civil-society level – to more intensive implementation-oriented dialogue on the 2030 Agenda and the DNHS with all societal groups in the *Länder* of Brandenburg, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Berlin and Thuringia. The RENN.central team believes that the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement and the DNHS have led to a new readiness for change.

In the light of this, the five civil-society consortium partners of RENN.central that emerged from the lengthy Agenda 21 processes want to promote the exchange of knowledge of sustainability strategies, strengthen the networking of stakeholders and initiate strategies and specific elements for joint implementation of a sustainable development process. As a result of the partners' many years' experience at municipal and civil-society level in the *Länder* of RENN.central, there is considered to be great potential here for strengthening effective cooperation between civil society and municipalities (administrative bodies and councils) at municipal level on a wide range of topics, campaigns and measures relating to implementation of the SDGs (horizontal integration).

However, there are regular calls from the municipal and civil-society level for consistency (which is at present lacking) between the UN, the EU and in particular the Federation and the *Länder* (vertical integration). The team at RENN.central is therefore not only addressing horizontal integration but also feeding the insights from the civil-society and municipal level into the discourse at Federation and *Länder* level in the form of appropriately designed contributions to the discussion and offers of talks. This is intended to make a practical and implementation-oriented contribution to strengthening the DNHS and the *Länder* strategies and continuing the development of their content.

3.2.2. Cooperation with *Länder*, municipalities and civil-society actors

RENN.central maintains trusting and constructive dialogue with representatives of the ministries responsible for the strategy of each *Land*. At specialist level there is regular dialogue on sustainability issues between the responsible ministries. Once RENN.central was established, key points for cooperation with the Central Regional Hub for Sustainability Strategies ('Eckpunkte zur Zusammenarbeit mit der Regionalen Netzstelle Nachhaltigkeitsstrategien') were drawn up. They form the basis for cooperation with RENN.central. Details of planned activities and opportunities for joint projects and events are discussed in an annual dialogue.

In the past 12 months, RENN.central and/or the individual consortium partners in the *Länder* have addressed the 2030 Agenda/SDGs and the revised version of the DNHS at specially organised events and in presentations and discussions.

For example, at RENN.central's first annual conference in Thuringia, the One World networks, the stakeholders in an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) programme and the environmental organisations of the five *Länder* were specifically invited to participate in networking and the exchange of ideas. Contributions from the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE, chairperson Marlehn Thieme), the Thuringian Council for Sustainable Development (spokesman Ron Hoffmann), and submissions from the Thuringian Environment Minister Anja Siegesmund and the Thuringian minister-president Bodo Ramelow covered the whole spectrum of sustainable development in practice. Networking with these stakeholder groups is being continued and intensified. Other target groups will be invited to take part in the second annual conference in Potsdam in 2018 and be involved in the discussions. The *Land* level will also be involved again.

As mentioned above, the municipal and civil-society level is the main starting point for the work of the RENN.central partner network (see also WBGU's flagship report 'Humanity on the move: Unlocking the transformative power of cities'). Municipalities will be the crucial implementation level for a sustainable development process if a worldwide process of this sort is to succeed within planetary limits.

Consideration of the potential of future interaction between cities and rural areas is also of major importance in RENN.central. One of the challenges involves the balance between the metropolis of Berlin and the non-city *Länder* – big-city atmosphere, growth of cities versus rural areas, disparities in demographic change, different approaches and opportunities with regard to lifestyles/consumption patterns/ mobility/education, etc.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the global implications of the SDGs are key issues being considered. How this can succeed as a ‘great transformation’ (WBGU) in the context of all 17 SDGs is the question that sets the tone for the cooperation.

One of the insights gained from RENN.central’s work to date is that the municipal and civil-society level is extremely suitable for implementing the 2030 Agenda locally and regionally and is very willing to do this. A second and related insight is this: if this willingness is to result in successful substantive action on a large scale, the Federation and the *Länder* must have in place an appropriate enabling environment (regulatory framework, financial and human resources) that can be permanently and reliably used by the municipal and civil-society level. In addition there is consideration at municipal level – especially among civil-society organisations – of the well-known contradictory nature of the grants and subsidies of the Federation and the *Länder*. Some organisations also very firmly point out the contradictory nature of the 17 SDGs – contradictions that objectively cannot be resolved via the official position that all 17 SDGs must only be considered and addressed as a unit. What this specifically means needs to be worked out together, communicated and underpinned; this remains a permanent objective of RENN.central in dialogue with municipalities and civil society.

RENN.central meets with considerable interest and finds that there is a willingness to engage in dialogue, involvement and cooperation. It frequently also encounters the question of whether substantial funding and support can be provided.

Educating the diverse target groups about the profile and objectives of the RENN thus remains a challenge, especially as the partner structure, the selected priorities and the modes of operation of the RENN hubs vary across the country, sometimes very widely (see also the information on RENN.west). There are certainly anxieties about a new player.

In addition, many stakeholders are sceptical about networking work without a clear mandate and substance.

However, there is in general great interest in being involved in further development of the DNHS and working for effective implementation of it. However, many discussion partners want this to be governed by binding rules and procedures.

The present results were made possible by the fact that all the partners in RENN.central were able to access their extensive networks, other projects and issues in their organisations and also the RENN network overall, the RENN Coordination Centre and the RNE.

3.2.3. Differing structural conditions in the *Länder*

The sustainability strategies that exist in Thuringia, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Brandenburg are in some cases relatively old and they vary – sometimes widely – in their priorities, structures, hierarchical links, target and indicator systems and implementation instruments. Berlin struck out on its own in 2015 with the Berlin Sustainability Profile; a sustainability strategy is being discussed. Some *Länder* strategies/(reports) have recently been revised (Saxony) or are currently being revised (e.g. Thuringia and Brandenburg), with varying intensity in terms not only of participation but also of their reference to the SDGs and *Länder*-specific concretisation of them. These references to the SDGs and the DHNS need to be supported from a municipal and civil-society perspective during revisions in the coming years.

Some *Länder* had or have advisory councils on sustainable development that are playing an active part in this.

Following a decision of the *Landtag* in Thuringia, the first parliamentary advisory council on sustainable development is to be set up there shortly.

In parallel with the nationwide action plan on Education for Sustainable Development, several *Länder* are also working on ESD action plans in varying ways and with varying intensity. Similar variation occurs generally in relation to many other ministry strategies, climate change mitigation, mobility and digitalisation, in each case also with reference to sustainability. Evaluation and orientation as an umbrella strategy or guiding strategy that actually provides a basis for ministry strategies remains a challenge for the sustainability strategies of the *Länder*.

Funding opportunities for municipalities and civil-society stakeholders also vary widely between *Länder* and in the specific area of sustainability and Agenda 21 there has been a widespread tendency in recent years for these opportunities to be reduced. There are also variations in the scope and extent of civil-society support structures pertaining to sustainability, One World cooperation and climate and energy. For example, in the field of sustainability this ranges from the long-term support provided to the Sustainability Centre Thuringia in the form of 4-5 posts and a project budget to support via half-posts in associations and regular but project- or situation-related funding in associations.

3.2.4. Successful examples of our action to date

First an example of synergies and of the method of working throughout the RENN network. Since the start of 2017, as part of the project 'Globally sustainable municipalities in Thuringia', seven municipalities have for the first time been developing their own integrated sustainability strategies in bodies composed of representatives from the fields of policy-making, local government and civil society on a parity basis. This project is being implemented by the organisation Zukunftsähiges Thüringen e.V. (consortium leader RENN.central). The concept was modelled on one developed by LAG 21 NRW e.V. (consortium leader RENN.west). Knowledge transfer was achieved at an early stage through training sessions and the exchange of experience. There is interest in wider implementation, e.g. for Berlin and Brandenburg.

The 'Council leaders' dialogue on sustainable municipal development in Thuringia' (similar to the RNE's mayors' dialogue) is also being viewed with interest in other *Länder*.

As a result of the cooperation in RENN.central, the stakeholders have taken up the idea of setting up a state-wide civil-society structure for Saxony. The 'Landesverband nachhaltiges Sachsen' (State Association Sustainable Saxony) is due to be founded in the spring of 2018.

In general at the events that RENN.central has organised for an individual *Land* and or group of *Länder* we have presented the revised version of the DNHS to a wide range of stakeholders, highlighted its relevance to sustainable development and discussed issues of content and structure in a professional way. Some of the proposals for further development of the DNHS that have emerged from this discussion are attached to this paper in the overview with RENN.west and RENN.south (see Annex).

3.3. RENN.south

The aim of RENN is to network and support civil-society activities of relevance to the sustainability strategies of the Federation, the *Länder* and municipalities. There are already many projects and initiatives that work to raise awareness of **sustainable lifestyles**. RENN.south seeks to strengthen the activities of these stakeholders in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg through a commitment to networking and to further dissemination of encouraging examples. RENN.south therefore subsumes its activities under the overall heading of 'Strengthening commitment to sustainable living'.

The ways in which links with the National Sustainability Strategy are created include through membership of the national 'Netzwerk nachhaltiger Konsum' (Sustainable Consumption Network) and involvement in its work.

The focus of the first year of work at RENN.south was on identifying stakeholders, contacting actors, investigating needs and campaigning for the basic idea of RENN. In this work we both made use of existing network structures and sought and acquired new actors and partners.

3.3.1. Cooperation with *Länder*, municipalities and civil-society actors

At *Land* level there are at present very few direct content-related points of contact with the sustainability strategy of either *Land*.

In Bavaria the Council of Ministers agreed in October to extend the sustainability strategy of 2013.

In neither *Land* is comprehensive cooperation with and systematic involvement of civil-society actors in connection with further development of the strategies a priority. There is a regular exchange of information about RENN activities with the responsible ministry representatives.

In Bavaria an event was held for the **municipal** level at which one of the principal issues addressed was the subject of municipal sustainability strategies; in Baden-Württemberg the first event is scheduled for April 2018. There are plans for other events in 2018 to highlight the opportunities for supporting civil-society sustainability activities in municipalities and regions. Links with the Sustainability Office of the Baden-Württemberg State Institute for the Environment (LUBW) and the Centre for Sustainable Municipal Development in Bavaria ensure that our works dovetails with existing activities that have municipalities as their target group.

In order to involve **civil-society actors**, two multiplier workshops were held with selected associations and initiatives and many detailed individual discussions were also held. As a fixed networking opportunity for all the *Länder* we organise an annual forum that gives these actors broad scope for presenting their activities and exchanging experiences. This aspect in particular has met with very positive resonance and will be developed even more strongly as a format in future.

One of the aims of RENN.south is to support not only the large civil-society associations and networks but also to focus on small 'unorganised parts of civil society' (as Ulla Burchardt said at the first RENN days in Berlin). There are differences between large associations and small initiatives in terms of their needs and their interest in networking.

Large established associations and networks in the field of the environment/One World are concerned that RENN may create duplicate structures in relation to their activities and that they may be constricted. Allaying these concerns was initially one of the principal tasks when making contact and holding talks. In addition, it became clear that managers of these structures sometimes explicitly expected RENN to exert political pressure on governments at *Land* and federal level in order to further their own aims.

Smaller initiatives and also the lower level of these large associations/networks would like practical help and support for their work. To achieve this it would be necessary and useful to be able to make small grants, since these groups are often unable to raise even the self-contributions required in connection with previous grants. This point was included in the RENN.south concept but unfortunately it was rejected; it should be reconsidered as a matter of urgency. Discussions at the first RENN days in Berlin raised the same point. Opportunities to network via events supported by RENN.south were welcomed and people were keen to take advantage of them. Simply for reasons of time, voluntary initiatives need mainly regional opportunities of this sort.

The work to date has confirmed that networking is not an end in itself and participants must be able to recognise the added value that it brings over and above the dialogue at events. Most actors are happy to contribute their expertise to the discussion and exchange of experience, although this cannot be viewed in complete isolation from the overarching and political context. It must be possible to communicate the connection-forming potential of the experience that actors contribute to the discussions via RENN. We have also learned that striking the right balance at events between open dialogue that is not pre-structured and professional input is a particular challenge.

With all civil-society groups it is difficult to create **cross-topic networking**. For reasons of time such networking is often met with major reservations. Insight into an overarching perspective of this sort is hard to communicate. However, this is a problem of all sustainability strategies: How can sectoral issue-based approaches be linked to an overarching sustainability approach? There needs to be a greater emphasis on this problem if civil society is to be called on to become engaged in this way.

3.3.2. Successful examples of our action to date

Overall there is great interest in RENN and in cooperation, especially from civil-society actors. To utilise this, it is essential to hold detailed discussions and to express appreciation of the actors' involvement. Positive feedback from the events for individual *Länder* and groups of *Länder* that have been held so far confirms that the networking work is going well. Major challenges for the RENN arise not only from the complexity of the issues but also from the diverse nature of the target groups: policy-makers, local government officers and civil society have different points of view and different support needs. Within civil society, too, there are different demands and interests. It is always necessary to identify core issues that as many actors as possible can work on together.

4. Experiences and ideas from the work of the RENN to date

4.1. Decade of implementation

The DNHS is an important reference point for RENN activities and it is highly regarded internationally for its comprehensive target and indicator system and specially created implementation structures. Despite this, insufficient progress has been made on implementation of key sustainability targets relating in particular to compliance with global boundaries. It is therefore now crucial to pay particular attention to the implementation process with the support of the RENN hubs and to strengthen the position of the DNHS. The major opportunity for the RENN hubs lies in their role as independent supporters and networkers of various actors.

4.2. Interactions, conflicts of interests/objectives

An important aspect of the work of the RENN hubs is bringing different actors and approaches together for a sustainable development process. Both NGOs and ministries usually work on an issue-related basis. Establishing overarching connections relevant to sustainable development is often difficult, as the experience of the RENN hubs has shown. In the revised version of the DNHS the Federal government has made it particularly clear that in implementing a sustainable development process greater attention needs to be paid to interactions, such as conflicts of interests and objectives. One of the ways in which this was achieved was through ministry coordinators. We suggest that the scientific platform is commissioned to systematically analyse the interactions and make the findings available to the political process. The relevant interactions include interactions with the international agreements signed by Germany such as the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda.

4.3. Social vision for a sustainable development process

The RENN should make good examples visible and provide a nationwide platform for implementation of a sustainable development process. These small and large success stories are mosaic pieces in a sustainable development process. At all federal levels, attempts to formulate a convincing vision for a sustainable development process in Germany have not yet succeeded. A positive picture of the future and a social debate about the opportunities associated with transformation could be constructive aids to countering fears of change processes and short- and long-term conflicts of targets and interests. The RENN hubs could play an important part in this.

4.4. Mandates of participation formats

Structures for participation in the development and implementation of sustainability strategies have been created at all levels. The RENN hubs make an important contribution to this that is designed to link civil society overall with sustainability strategies at municipal, *Land* and nationwide levels. To prevent civil-society and other non-state actors becoming fatigued by helping to work on these sustainable development instruments, the mandates and tasks of these participation formats should be more clearly defined. Networking is not an end in itself

in this context – it is fundamentally important to keep an eye on the networks' ability to establish connections and on the outcomes achieved within them.

4.5. Education for sustainable development

With the adoption of the World Action Programme (WAP) on Education for Sustainable Development, the 2030 Agenda and SDGs and Article 12 of the Paris Climate Agreement and the inclusion of the SDGs in the sustainability strategies of the Federation and the *Länder*, education for sustainable development has become a separate target area of ever greater importance in the concept of sustainable development. To shape a society that is fit for the future it is necessary 'to empower learners to transform themselves and the society they live in' (WAP-ESD). RENN structures incorporate the experience of social innovation thus acquired into the further development of sustainability policies. One of the central challenges of strengthening the activities of the individual *Länder* and linking them with each other lies in Germany's federal concept, which particularly in the field of education is highly *Land*-specific. In 2017 the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs unanimously adopted an orientation framework for the learning area of global development – a concept that must now be implemented. A crucial issue will be how this recommendation is incorporated into the sustainability strategies of the *Länder*. Through the RENN hubs civil society can do a great deal to demand and support this process.

4.6. Sustainability in public budgets

Public budgets are an important instrument for implementing a sustainable development process. Here it could be shown what funds are being provided for implementation of the objectives defined in the DNHS and which uses of funds conflict with the objectives. Any interactions between the objectives can also be highlighted by this means.

4.7. Germany's international responsibility

The revised version of the DNHS now contains eleven international targets in place of the previous two. The stronger assumption of international responsibility in the target system is greatly to be welcomed. Nevertheless, important action areas of German policy with international effects receive insufficient mention in the strategy (foreign and security policy, trade policy, agricultural and fisheries policy, etc.). It would appear crucial to take these areas into consideration.

Because of the variation in the work and structure of the RENN hubs, some experiences are not based on the experience of all RENN hubs, but all the hubs have validated the experiences as being substantively correct.

5. Organisations involved

RENN.south:

Sustainability Office of the LUBW (Baden-Württemberg State Institute for the Environment)
Landesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement Bayern e.V.

RENN.central:

Zukunftsfähiges Thüringen e.V.
Berlin 21 e.V.
Brandenburg 21
CiViXX – Werkstatt für Zivilgesellschaft
Netzwerk Zukunft Sachsen-Anhalt e.V.

RENN.west:

ANU – Arbeitsgemeinschaft Natur und Umweltbildung Hessen e.V.
Entwicklungspolitisches Landesnetzwerk Rheinland-Pfalz
Energieagentur Rheinland-Pfalz
Europäische Akademie Otzenhausen
Germanwatch e.V.
Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Agenda 21 NRW e.V.
Environmental Campus Birkenfeld

ANNEX 1: Contribution to RENN international peer review