

Communication

from the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development

Statement of the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development on the Report of the 2013 Peer Review on the National Sustainable Development Strategy "Sustainability – Made in Germany"

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Summary

In the present Statement, the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development (Parlamentarischer Beirat für nachhaltige Entwicklung – PBnE) of the German Bundestag expresses its position regarding the Report of the eight international experts who assessed the sustainability policy of the Federal Government on behalf of the Federal Government in 2013. The 2013 Peer Review entitled "Sustainability – Made in Germany" contains exhaustive assessments of the individual national and international policy fields in which the Federal Government has been implementing the subject of sustainability since 2002, and of sustainability management in Germany.

The Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development assesses the statements and recommendations of the peers, whose present Report follows on from their first Report in 2009 and examines how sustainability policy developed in the period up to 2013.

Based on the recommendations of the Peer Review, the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development arrives at the following statements:

- The PBnE is convinced that a pioneering role of Germany in sustainable development will help to strengthen the international competitiveness of German enterprises, to more consistently exploit opportunities and to promote the realisation of ideas. The PBnE advocates Germany assuming a European and global pioneering role as regards sustainable development. We need a stronger commitment to the sustainable development and climate goals, and institutional strengthening of the national Sustainable Development Strategy at all levels.
- The PBnE proposes that the European Sustainable Development Strategy be urgently updated, in order for it to be able to serve as a binding framework for the Europe 2020 Strategy and the associated national reform plans.
- The PBnE sees the transformation of the energy system as being the "greatest collective transformation project" (according to the peers) in the coming years and calls upon all those responsible to engage in intensified planning efforts and more extensive investments in the fields of networks, storage and efficiency, but also to keep down the price increases for socially disadvantaged households.
- The PBnE supports the call to more strongly integrate the sustainability concept in the formal training curricula for future teaching staff of all school types. The institutions responsible for *education for sustainable development* should develop an outcome-oriented indicator that reveals the progress made in education work.
- The PBnE expressly advocates the improvement of its own administrative and human resources. Appropriate staffing of the Advisory Council Secretariat at the German Bundestag and all four parliamentary groups in the German Bundestag through the establishment of positions for policy experts in the higher service, similar to those of other bodies dealing with cross-cutting issues, guarantees intensive parliamentary support of sustainability policy in terms of content.

1 Preliminary remark

The Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development (PBnE) has been supervising the national Sustainable Development Strategy in the German Bundestag since first being appointed in 2004. In the spirit of its mandate, the PBnE works on an interdisciplinary basis and on long-term solutions, and thus in consensus with all parliamentary groups represented in the German Bundestag. It expresses criticism wherever the Sustainable Development Goals are stagnating, submits proposals for improvements and seeks a dialogue with the relevant players. This includes the February 2013 meeting of the PBnE with the eight high-ranking experts in the framework of the Peer Review, and also this Statement of the PBnE on the Report submitted in September 2013.

Regarding the experts and the procedure adopted by them, the PBnE refers to the Statement of the Council for Sustainable Development (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung – RNE) "For a New Start in Sustainability Policy" of 4 November 2013. In it, the Council suggests that the recommendations of the experts be dealt with in the German Bundestag, which the PBnE is pleased to do in the form of this Statement.

The PBnE calls to mind – like the experts in their Report – the origins of the sustainability concept. Starting with the 1972 Report of the Club of Rome entitled "The Limits to Growth", the Brundtland Commission and the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, a Study Commission on the *Protection of Humanity and the Environment – Objective and Framework for Sustainable Development* was occupied with a *Sustainability Concept* in the 13th

electoral term. It noted in its Final Report (Bundestag printed paper 13/11200): "The discussion is tending towards interpreting sustainable development as social policy that, in principle and in the long-term view, treats all the dimensions mentioned equally" and "Sustainable development must become a top priority and be the focus of the endeavours of the state". With its concrete proposals, the Study Commission laid the foundations for the national Sustainable Development Strategy, submitted in 2002 under the title *Perspectives for Germany*. The Commission furthermore proposed the appointment of a "council on sustainably future-compatible development", that was to be based at the Federal Chancellery, equipped with the right to take up issues on its own initiative, and independent of legislative terms. It was in this spirit that the *Council for Sustainable Development* was appointed in 2001. Following years of intensive discussions in the German Bundestag regarding its form – e.g. in an expert statement prepared by the Bundestag's Office for Technology Assessment (Bundestag printed paper 15/2129) – the *Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development* (PBnE) was first appointed in 2004, to provide parliamentary supervision of the Sustainable Development Strategy. The PBnE regularly performs this duty. In the ten years of its existence, however, the model of sustainable development still does not appear to have completely established itself in the specialised committees and the relevant directorates-general at the Federal Ministries.

The world as a whole may already have made some progress on the way to sustainable development, but the challenges are likewise growing. That is why the Member States of the United Nations decided, at the Earth Summit 2012, to elaborate universal Sustainable Development Goals. The PBnE welcomes this decision, and the dedication with which these goals are currently being elaborated. Germany is making an important contribution, based on its experience, and should advocate ambitious goals at the European Union level. It was also the intention of the initiators, working on the basis of the Agenda 21 adopted in 1992, to elaborate concrete goals that harmonise socioeconomic growth and responsible dealing with the environment. In contrast to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are no longer to apply solely to developing countries, but to all Member States of the United Nations.

Monitoring of the national Sustainable Development Strategy by international experts, as occasioned by the Federal Government, is particularly to be welcomed against this backdrop, since it is a sign of the perception of the great challenges, and also of the will to take sustainable development further forwards and to continue to improve the strategy and the management.

By submitting this Statement, the PBnE is following up its earlier Statement on the 2009 Peer Review (Bundestag printed paper 17/1657) and would like to thank the experts for taking up its criticism, expressed at the time, that sustainability policy should be examined on a broader basis, and greater attention paid to the federal structures existing in Germany. It regrets that its Statement is only being submitted after such a long period, this partly being due to its not being embedded in the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag. The PBnE is dependent on advocates for its appointment and sees its consolidation as being an important task for the current electoral term. After all, the supervision of the sustainability policy of the Federal Government by the German Bundestag is an important driving force for implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy, the lack of determined advancement of which is criticised by the experts in their Report. The PBnE plans to work on the intensified implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy in this legislative term.

2 Growing world population on a limited planet

The PBnE underlines the challenges named in the Peer Review Report and their urgency. The discovery of new sources of fossil raw materials cannot alter the limited nature of Planet Earth. Their extraction and utilisation often entails higher risks for man and the environment, as illustrated by the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Accessing ever deeper-lying strata produces more overburden, and the overexploitation of nature increases as a result. That is to the detriment of important sustainable development goals, such as biodiversity or climate protection.

Any processing of fossil raw materials releases further greenhouse gases that were bound in them for thousands of years, ultimately making human life on Earth possible in the first place. The realisation that the CO₂ limit will be reached before the last raw materials are recovered, was recently expressed again, and across all parliamentary groups, in Part D of the Final Report of the Study Commission on *Growth, Wellbeing and Quality of Life – Paths to Sustainable Economic Activity and Social Progress in the Social Market Economy* of the 17th electoral term (Bundestag printed paper 17/13300), entitled "Severing the links between growth, resource use and technological progress (decoupling) – possibilities and limits", which states that any delay in taking action would necessitate "more rapid, and thus more far-reaching measures" (Page 455).

According to the peers, the problems must be viewed in a global context. In other words, industrial nations with production facilities transferred abroad bear joint responsibility for climate and environmental protection, as well as for social standards in the entire supply chain. The supply chain starts where the raw materials are recovered and includes the transport of raw materials, semi-finished and finished products. The peers see climate change as interacting with the global financial architecture and with social injustice. In view of the continuing growth of the world population, they say the urgency of comprehensive solutions is increasing. Rising demand is causing cost-based competition in the fossil raw materials sector, this favouring the demand for renewable raw materials. Nonetheless, an eye needs to be kept on the cost for society as a whole and the benefit for society as a whole.

The peers say that Germany and Europe are currently running the risk of losing their pioneering role in the development of environmental technologies. Europe has an important function in the current process of elaborating universal sustainability targets, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The experts call to mind that, above all, Germany and Europe are technologically in a position to take the lead with ambitious goals and could take on a model role. The European Sustainable Development Strategy is a good basis for a joint negotiating position at the United Nations level, say the peers. Germany assumed a leading role in stabilising the financial sector, and it should again do so in the field of sustainable development. The PBnE is convinced that a pioneering role of Germany in many areas would not harm the country's international competitiveness, but that it is necessary to more consistently exploit opportunities and promote the realisation of ideas.

3 Overview of approaches for strengthening sustainability management

The experts note that Germany has taken substantial measures in the past four years. The PBnE welcomes this. For example, the subject of sustainability has been strengthened at the Federal Chancellery. The State Secretaries Committee has utilised its coordinating function and made progress in key subject areas, e.g. as regards sustainable public procurement. Some goals of the Sustainable Development Strategy have been updated, partly up to the year 2050, and the Federal Statistical Office is continuing its independent monitoring of the sustainability indicators. The experts state that the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development has been strengthened by the appraisal of the sustainability impact assessment in the framework of regulatory impact assessment, and that the Council for Sustainable Development has submitted sound studies to the government and initiated important stakeholder processes. Some federal states, or *Länder*, have introduced sustainable development strategies and, like many towns and cities, launched important initiatives. The peers note that important transformation processes have been set in motion in a number of policy fields. In addition to the energy system transformation, these included the platform for sustainable public procurement, as well as voluntary codes, e.g. for sustainable building. The increase in the research budget and the institution of the German Sustainability Award are likewise seen as progress.

The experts point out that demographic change is, however, confronting Germany with major challenges, especially due to the decline in the working population. Germany must therefore make greater use of its potential for transformation into a sustainable society. Several possible suggestions for improvements are mentioned, such as prolongation of the individual working life, child care, qualification and immigration, elimination of obstacles to mobility, job-sharing, etc.

The cooperation between government and economy needs new relationships in order to promote innovations and the dissemination of knowledge. There is a need for new consultation and advisory structures between politics and business, in order to develop road maps, as well as sustainable development strategies for business sectors, more state implementation and the promotion of model practice through further competitions and awards. In addition, the financial markets must be involved to a greater extent, and long-term funding models need to be developed.

As in 2009, the experts consider the transformation of the energy system to be the most important challenge. They refer to it as the "greatest collective transformation project" since reunification. There is a need for intensified planning efforts and more extensive investments in the fields of networks, storage and efficiency, also so as not to jeopardise power supplies and to keep down the price increases for socially disadvantaged households. However, there is still a lack of clear framework conditions for business enterprises.

4 The recommendations in detail

4.1 Federal Government: Creation of long-term framework conditions for implementation, and restructuring of capacities

Among other things, the experts call for a stronger commitment to the sustainable development and climate goals, expansion and institutional strengthening of the national Sustainable Development Strategy, and the assumption of a European and global "leading role" for sustainable development. In addition, the Federal Government should work towards revitalisation of the European Sustainable Development Strategy. The PBnE supports this call, not least for a common, strong position for the current elaboration of universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the United Nations and their implementation.

In relation to the national Sustainable Development Strategy, the PBnE refers to its Statement on the 2012 Progress Report (Bundestag printed paper 17/11670). In the associated resolution, it calls upon the Federal Government, in connection with the Sustainable Development Goals, to "pay greater attention to implementation and, if appropriate, take further measures and not subordinate the Sustainable Development Goals to other, short-term goals if this jeopardises social, ecological and economic development in the long term" (Bundestag printed paper 17/14008).

The peers recommend that updating of the Sustainable Development Strategy already be started in 2014. Milestones should be defined more clearly, and ministries should examine sub-areas more closely. One of the focuses should be progress in public procurement. At this point, the PBnE welcomes the resolution of the State Secretaries Committee on Sustainable Development of 30 June 2014, that the ministries should put greater emphasis, internally and externally, on the subject of sustainable development in their policy fields. It also welcomes the fact that ministries urge their federal holdings to apply the German Sustainability Code (Deutscher Nachhaltigkeitskodex – DNK) and would like to see all ministries themselves also gradually begin to report on the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in their organisations. Up to now, only few ministries address this subject in their ministry reports. Exemplary in this respect are the ministry reports of the Federal Ministry for the Environment and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which apply international sustainable development standards. The Federation is a major customer on the market and can, by gearing itself more to sustainable products, help to ensure that a corresponding supply is created.

The experts again recommend the introduction of sector-specific road maps – a demand that the PBnE already supported four years ago. In this context, it is a question of sub-goals that are already being set today, such as in the European WEEE Directive (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment). It defines concrete, binding regulations that will come into effect in a few years – because it is important to make progress visible and link it to the previously initiated measures. The players can adjust to the changed framework conditions in this way. In addition to which, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy becomes more transparent. This, in turn, permits monitoring, so that the measures can also be corrected or modified, if necessary. It is important that not only representatives of the enterprises, but also key non-governmental organisations be involved in the elaboration of road maps. During the current legislative term, the PBnE plans to more closely supervise the monitoring process already initiated by the Federal Government.

The Head of the Federal Chancellery is also responsible for the subject of sustainability, meaning that the topic has acquired a key position at the ministerial level. It would be helpful if the Sustainable Development Strategy could gain more public attention. There is a substantial need for improvement in this respect.

The experts moreover call for more meetings of the State Secretaries Committee on Sustainable Development, as well as a publicly accessible list of priorities. The PBnE welcomes the fact that the State Secretaries Committee has set itself far more topics for 2014 and 2015, and looks forward to continuing the existing cooperation. The PBnE regrets that it was not always able to communicate its position ahead of the meeting, as offered by the Head of the Federal Chancellery for the first time in the 17th electoral term. This is occasionally due to the fact that an interparty position on a particular subject will foreseeably not materialise, especially when current legislative projects are concerned on which the parliamentary groups hold irreconcilable positions. In addition, it takes several months to elaborate an interparty position, owing to the substantial need for coordination. To have the opportunity to elaborate an interparty position, it is therefore necessary that the dates for the meetings of the State Secretaries Committee be communicated in good time. The exchange on the results of the deliberations should be improved. Some progress has already been made in this respect, by the Chairman of the

PBnE participating at the meetings of the State Secretaries Committee since this legislative term, and subsequently reporting at the meetings of the PBnE. Beyond this, the PBnE suggests that the results be discussed with the State Secretary responsible for the respective subject.

4.2 Bundestag: A stronger role for parliament

The experts clearly advocated strengthening the parliamentary supervision of sustainability policy and the sustainability impact assessment in regulatory impact assessment. Thus, the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development is in future to be appointed as soon as possible. The PBnE agrees with this. Particularly the task of appraising the sustainability impact assessment in bills and ordinances requires preferably uninterrupted functioning. The PBnE will look into how its work can be consolidated and more strongly integrated in the regular parliamentary workflows.

The PBnE welcomes the demand of the peers that, in the spirit of sustainable development, the Bundestag exert a more effective influence on government action, and equally on budget and spending decisions. As far as regulatory impact assessment is concerned, the PBnE agrees with the experts' recommendation and herewith calls on the Federal Government to submit detailed assessments of effects on the Sustainable Development Strategy, so that greater consideration can be given to the goals of the Sustainable Development Strategy in regulatory impact assessment. In the course of the current electoral term, the PBnE will examine whether and to what extent a successful start could be made on a material review of all legislative projects.

Within the framework of its existing possibilities, the PBnE has already strengthened the process of appraising sustainability impact assessments in the German Bundestag. While, in the preceding electoral term, the PBnE only submitted its statements to the specialised committees in cases where the sustainability impact assessment lacked plausibility, every statement is now submitted to the specialised committees, so that the Sustainable Development Goals are perceived more strongly in day-to-day politics. Moreover, the specialised committees are now obliged to discuss the PBnE's statement and draw up a written assessment.

The experts moreover recommend that the Bundestag expand its "agenda-setting". The PBnE appointed the rapporteur groups for its regular tasks at a very early stage. Regarding supervision of the work of the specialised committees, it introduced a fixed item on the agenda for this. It will additionally appoint rapporteurs for every specialised committee, in order to be able to use its meetings to discuss current topics and problems relating to sustainable development, if necessary, and thereupon to decide whether and in what form the PBnE will look into the matter. It seldom performed this task of submitting expert statements on current topics during the 17th electoral term, but will increasingly do so in future.

The experts consider the current human resources of the PBnE to be insufficient. The PBnE underlines this problem, since it greatly weakens its competencies. Apart from the post for a Head of Secretariat, the associated Advisory Council Secretariat of the Bundestag Administration has positions for just one officer in the higher intermediate service and one secretary. The content-related work, i.e. the elaboration of occasionally extensive position papers and statements, as well as their time-consuming interparty coordination, is handled by the individual offices of the Members of Parliament. Since the staff of the MPs are already occupied with the organisational and content-related preparation of the specialised committees, they take on this task in addition. Consequently, they can only find very limited time and only on a project-related basis. As a result, regular technical supervision of the normal tasks is not feasible. The appointment of rapporteurs for every committee is an attempt to counteract this situation, although the available capacities still ultimately remain limited. The PBnE therefore suggests examining the possibility of a special budget of the German Bundestag for the establishment of positions in the parliamentary groups, such as already exists for other bodies dealing with cross-cutting issues. Just as cooperation with the European level is supported by a special budget, it should also be possible to support this interdepartmental activity in the parliamentary groups and in the Bundestag Administration for the great goal of sustainable development in the spirit of the Agenda 21 of the United Nations. If posts in the Bundestag Administration and the parliamentary groups are regularly created for Study Commissions and Committees of Inquiry, it should most definitely be possible for the long-term, future-oriented work of the Advisory Council on Sustainable Development.

Similarly to the sustainability reporting in the ministries and their subordinate authorities and enterprises, the PBnE calls on the Administration of the German Bundestag to likewise introduce regular, preferably annual reporting on its sustainable public procurement activities. This reporting should be based on the German Sustainability Code. The PBnE should submit an expert statement on these reports.

The experts furthermore suggest fostering the exchange with the *Länder* and the municipalities regarding experience with sustainability impact assessment. The PBnE is happy to take up this suggestion. It had already contacted the *Land* Parliaments in the past electoral term and planned to intensify its cooperation with them. This particularly applies to those goals of the national Sustainable Development Strategy whose implementation predominantly lies in the hands of the *Länder*.

4.3 Council for Sustainable Development: Supervision of stakeholder cooperation

The experts recommend that the Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) should increasingly make contact with the relevant stakeholder groups and serve as a platform and process supervisor. The PBnE would greatly welcome this upgrading. Sustainable development needs a change of awareness that cannot be decreed from the top down. Therefore, technical and process-related support of projects and activities is an important element. The German Bundestag has substantially increased the budget funds for the RNE for the period 2014 to 2016, in order to give a corresponding signal.

When updating the national Sustainable Development Strategy, the experts suggest that the RNE should take on an important role in evaluation and the subsequent implementation process. The PBnE supports the RNE supervising the process in the aforementioned form. Implementation itself is, however, primarily the responsibility of the ministries. However, the question should be discussed as to whether and to what extent the Council can provide further support in this respect, also to involve the *Länder* and municipalities to a greater degree.

The PBnE is pleased to take up the recommendation regarding more cooperation with the Council. After all, it is an important provider of ideas for the PBnE. For example, the Council has prepared numerous studies and recommendations, such as the "Dialoge Zukunft Vision 2050" ("Dialogues for the Future – Vision for 2050"), which the PBnE suggested in the framework of the 2009 Peer Review. Beyond this, the PBnE supports the proposal to also make the Council's expertise available to other countries through collaboration with the Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The PBnE supports the Council's idea of also establishing the Sustainability Campaign Week at the European level. At only little financial expense, this would make it possible to strengthen a culture of sustainable development, and this should be supported by the European Union.

4.4 Federal states and municipalities: Promotion of joint action

The implementation of numerous goals of the national Sustainable Development Strategy also lies in municipal hands. In this context, the experts propose a Working Group between the Federal Chancellery and the State Chancelleries in order to intensify cooperation.

The PBnE already supported this proposal in its Statement on the 2009 Peer Review. An exchange between the Head of the Federal Chancellery and corresponding sustainability experts in the State Chancelleries of the *Länder* would facilitate the steering of implementation. Experience can be exchanged, and necessary "cross-border", interdisciplinary cooperation organised, in this way. The conferences of specialist ministers hardly offer any opportunities for interdisciplinary coordination, although this is important for sustainable development.

For the current legislative term, the PBnE has set itself the goal of commencing a dialogue with the *Land* Parliaments to engage in a mutual exchange on intensified implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The PBnE additionally recommends that implementation of the goals of the national Sustainable Development Strategy be more extensively coordinated with the *Länder*. For example, some goals can for the most part only be implemented at the *Land* level. This particularly applies to the fields of education and land take. It is important to the PBnE to promote early-childhood education, for example, especially cognitive, social and emotional development, since this paves the way for good school-leaving qualifications. It is incumbent on the *Länder* to conduct suitable surveys in this context, in order to be able to react at an early stage by taking corresponding action. In this respect, the PBnE refers to its Statement on the 2012 Progress Report (Bundestag printed paper 17/11670, Indicator 9a). In connection with the daily new land take, it is incumbent on the municipalities to increasingly make use of wasteland and contain "green field" construction. In its previous Statements on the Progress Reports, the PBnE said that, looking to the future, the target must be zero hectares. But there is still a long way to go before reaching even the 30-hectare target of the national Sustainable Development Strategy.

4.5 Civil society: Linking change processes for sustainable development to people

According to the experts, civil society is in a position to provide more input in the transformative sciences and in helping to shape processes. The existing funding of individual sustainable development projects should therefore be further expanded into programmes for action. The PBnE is aware that budget funds are scarce and becoming scarcer. Nonetheless, the federal budget is an important instrument for funding sustainable development. That is precisely why greater attention must be paid to what the revenue is spent on. The funding of concepts fit for the future should be given priority in future. Equally, traditional subsidies for projects and undertakings should be critically reviewed as regards their fitness for the future. Successive steps in the right direction can be taken with the help of road maps and involving all the affected players. Transformation should be supported financially where necessary. What is important, however, is that transformation be promoted, rather than clinging to obsolete technologies.

4.6 New energy era: Planning and coordinating transformation

The experts note that the transformation of the energy system is the "greatest collective transformation project" since reunification. Germany has outstanding expertise. However, there is a need for intensified planning efforts and more extensive investments in the fields of networks, storage and efficiency, also so as not to jeopardise power supplies and to keep down price increases for socially disadvantaged households. According to the peers, however, there is still a lack of clear framework conditions. Particular attention should be paid to coordination of the timing.

They propose that existing normative instruments and fiscal measures be further developed, and that consumers be allowed to benefit from the falling price of renewable energies. In a global context, newly discovered sources of fossil energies, and technologies such as fracking, could possibly delay the consistent transition to renewable energies, say the peers.

The PBnE fundamentally agrees with the experts' findings. It is time to elaborate a new, comprehensive concept for an electricity market that promotes low-emission, sustainable energy carriers, guarantees the security of supplies, and does not impose unnecessary burdens on the public. The concept must be embedded in the European internal energy market. Energy efficiency should be rewarded, and rebound effects reduced.

The experts additionally recommend that a more resolute approach be taken in going ahead in further areas, mentioning the fields of transport, housing and farming. Road maps are necessary in this context. For the PBnE, too, these fields are important for climate protection, and it adds the fields of land and resource protection, as well as the life cycle economy. Unfortunately, the goals of the Sustainable Development Strategy are only partly being achieved. The indicator values are stagnating in the transport sector and, owing to the circumstances, also as regards finite resources, whose initial increase in efficiency is declining. There are no indicators for the housing sector. According to a survey by the Federal Statistical Office, the nitrogen inputs in farming are still too high. Therefore, an overarching approach is needed to effectively reduce them. There is still no time target as regards organic farming, a fact that was repeatedly criticised by the PBnE in its Statement on the 2012 Progress Report on the national Sustainable Development Strategy (Bundestag printed paper 17/11670). The PBnE considers the existing indicators for these fields to be largely adequate, whereas it sees the elaboration of road maps to be necessary, particularly in areas where progress is extensively stagnating.

4.7 Quality of life: Securing social cohesion, prosperity and wellbeing

The experts criticise the fact that, unlike the sustainable development indicators, the growth debate lacks empirical foundations. The PBnE supports this finding, and equally the demand that the Sustainable Development Strategy should play a pivotal role in the growth debate. After all, the Sustainable Development Strategy already emphasises the fields of quality of life and wellbeing by means of corresponding indicators. That was also the broad-based goal of the 1992 Agenda 21 of Rio. Thus, its Preamble reads: "However, integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfilment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous future. No nation can achieve this on its own; but together we can – in a global partnership for sustainable development."

The experts furthermore address the fields of nutrition and consumption. The progress made as regards sustainable food is pleasing, they say, but it continues to be an "economic niche". The food industry is still on the wrong track, and food wastage must be contained. High land prices counteract sustainable utilisation. In its Statement on the 2012 Progress Report on the national Sustainable Development Strategy, the PBnE called for minimisation of all the environmental impacts of farming and advocated corresponding, additional indicators, as well as a consumption indicator (Bundestag printed paper 17/11670, Indicator 12a, and "Re Chapter C – Further development of the indicators").

Above and beyond this, the experts' proposal to simplify the great variety of product marks and environmental labels also deserves support. The PBnE would therefore be pleased to see an initiative of the responsible ministries for providing the relevant players with a corresponding platform, so that the existing product certifications and marks, including the supply chains, become more transparent and easier to understand.

4.8 Shaping corporate sustainability: Providing dependable framework conditions and instruments

The experts acknowledge that some business enterprises are making "profitable progress". Embedding in the "context of a comprehensive sustainability policy" would, however, be more effective. There is a need to define long-term goals and a regulatory framework, but also to support dependable, voluntary measures. The experts recommend utilisation of the knowledge of the OECD, which has set up a comprehensive programme on corporate sustainability. Eco-fair public procurement should be strengthened, also by applying the German Sustainability Code in state-owned enterprises.

The PBnE respects the proposals made by the experts. The PBnE, too, considers it necessary to strengthen the functions of the OECD Liaison Office based at the Federal Ministry of Economics, in order to be able to better utilise the experience of the OECD in the field of "corporate sustainability". Enterprises in Germany are generally already well organised, e.g. in B.A.U.M. e.V. and Econsense, with the aim of operating more sustainably. However, the PBnE would welcome more extensive application of the German Sustainability Code (DNK). The Code was devised by the Council for Sustainable Development in collaboration with business enterprises of different sizes. It includes comprehensive, but nevertheless clearly structured and thus manageable, criteria for eco-fair business. The aim of the Code is that enterprises disclose the content of these criteria. Just over 60 enterprises have so far issued a statement of compliance. The envisaged adaptation of the DNK, to also enable its application in small and medium-sized enterprises, is welcomed by the PBnE. This is a very important step for further dissemination, particularly in Germany with its numerous small and medium-sized enterprises. The PBnE calls upon the Federal Government to successively apply the DNK in its own organisation, as well as in its subordinate authorities and federal holdings. The *Alliance for Sustainable Procurement* between the Federation, the *Länder* and the municipalities is an efficient network for further promoting sustainable public procurement. The *Competence Centre for Sustainable Procurement*, established at the Federal Ministry of the Interior in this framework, is continuing to build up corresponding expertise in order to support implementation.

The long-term goal must be to improve environmental and health protection, as well as working conditions, in developing and emerging countries, and to guarantee the observation of human rights. These are fields regulated by law in Germany. In other countries, there is a great need for support in this context, and increasing attention should be paid to this aspect in international relations. The PBnE plans to address this subject in greater depth during the current legislative term.

4.9 Government and economy: Cooperation in strategic implementation

According to the experts, the dialogue between the government and the economy, including the finance industry, needs to be strengthened and consolidated. The government should urge enterprises to adopt sector-specific strategies, involving the trade unions in the process. Road maps and a reporting system are important, in order to inform the public. The PBnE welcomes the strategies already presented by some sectors of the economy, and plans to address the subject of "corporate sustainability" in greater depth during the current electoral term.

4.10 Financing the transformation: Promoting a dialogue and creating conducive framework conditions

The Euro crisis is certainly a priority task, say the experts, but consideration should nevertheless be given to sustainable development during the economic recovery. In the long term, there are particularly great challenges regarding the financing of the preservation of the existing building and transport infrastructure, but also as regards the financing of the energy and mobility sectors. The PBnE welcomes the experts' proposal for a strategic dialogue and plans to address the topic of mobility during this legislative term, particularly against the backdrop of the updating of the Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan. For the PBnE, it is a question of reconsidering old structures and adapting them to new challenges.

4.11 Research and development: Strengthening knowledge and solutions for the transformation

Research plays a key role in the provision of knowledge, innovations and solutions for sustainable development. A need for research particularly exists in the fields of sustainable land use, future-oriented urban development, efficient use and re-use of resources, as well as climate change forecasts and adaptation strategies. Other important fields include lifestyles, nutrition and health. Financial promotion should particularly be expanded in the framework of project funding. The peers moreover recommend that expenditure in sustainability-related research be increased. The PBnE would therefore welcome it if the efforts to improve sustainability-related research at the national level were more extensively embedded in the context of the European Research Area (e.g. via *Horizon 2020* with its three programme sections) and the Federal Government provided more financial support for sustainability research.

All in all, the aim is to develop a better understanding of the relationship between man, nature and technology. Transdisciplinary approaches need to be encouraged to this end. In addition, the nexus approach needs to be further investigated. It is also recommended that the links between science and the national Sustainable Development Agenda be strengthened, where appropriate, and that representatives from civil society and practice be involved when formulating scientific goals. The PBnE welcomes the creation of the *ForschungsWende Civil Society Platform (CSO)*, which is funded by the Federal Ministry for the Environment and the Federal Environment Agency. The PBnE intends to address this topic, in order to promote the dialogue with civil society and determine any additional needs for support. Accordingly, there is a need for research in the field of environmental technologies, for example, but also as regards adaptation to climate change. The peers see the scientific community as being called upon to make headway regarding the question of how progress in transdisciplinary sustainability research and in the systemic engineering sciences can better be measured. Moreover, research establishments and institutions of higher education are recommended to develop an extended system for reporting on their achievements in sustainable development.

The PBnE requests the Federal Government to examine whether a kind of platform would be helpful in this context, e.g. as a supplement to *FONA (Research for Sustainable Development)*, on which the numerous minor and major successes can be viewed. This would simultaneously serve to create links between the individual fields. In the field of resource efficiency and adaptation strategies, the PBnE refers to the Resource Efficiency Programme and the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, in which context there is still a general need to improve the visibility of the successes achieved. The PBnE criticises the fact that individual ministries implement relatively large public relations campaigns on individual topics, whereas the Sustainable Development Strategy itself and its associated detailed strategies and programmes of measures are virtually unknown to the public. It would encourage the motivation of the public as potential players and as consumers, and promote a sustainability culture, if the Federal Government were to publicise the Sustainable Development Strategy and more extensively communicate its necessity to the public and the media.

4.12 Demography: Intensification of adaptive solutions

The experts note that Germany will be "confronted with a massive decline in the labour force" and should take a look at the experience of other countries. There is a need for studies regarding the changes in the scope and composition of the working population and its changed needs. Moreover, disparities in growth and shrinkage at the local and regional level need to be examined. Against this backdrop, family-related benefits should once again be scrutinised, because they lack efficiency. The experts recommend the creation of a suitable indicator

for demographic change and propose measures for counteracting the labour shortage. For example, the labour force capacity needs to be increased and working life prolonged. Similarly, there is a need for voluntary employment opportunities for older people to be created under the motto of "life-long learning", as well as for effectively planned immigration.

The PBnE welcomes the experts' view of demographic change, which poses major challenges for the social security systems, the building infrastructure and the social infrastructure in rural areas. The PBnE addressed the transport and building infrastructure during the 16th legislative term and noted that similar analyses are required regarding the social infrastructure.

4.13 Education: More effective integration of sustainability at every level of education

The Peer Review recommends that the concept of sustainability be more systematically introduced into all levels of education. The (Global) Action Programme of UNESCO is recommended as the catalyst. The PBnE subscribes to this recommendation. Education for sustainable development is of great strategic relevance for shaping sustainable development in society. The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005 – 2014) gave rise to a wide variety of projects and initiatives, and laid the foundations for the implementation of education for sustainable development in the fields of education. From the point of view of the PBnE, the follow-up project, the Global Action Programme, now needs to be supported further, in order to progress from a project to a structure. The positive features of the decade must therefore also continue to be preserved, and successful measures should be consolidated.

The PBnE supports the call to more extensively integrate the concept of sustainability in the formal training curricula for future teaching staff of all school types. The institutions responsible for education for sustainable development should develop an outcome-related indicator that illustrates the progress made in education work.

In the field of higher education, the Federation and the *Länder* should promote the development of education programmes on sustainable development. The PBnE can see potential as regards the expansion of sustainability research. Education for sustainable development should generally be a cross-cutting topic embracing all disciplines. From the point of view of the PBnE, institutions of higher education should be encouraged to act in a transdisciplinary manner, e.g. by involving practitioners and representatives of civil society. The PBnE furthermore subscribes to the call of numerous experts for excellence in transdisciplinary sustainability research and in the systemic engineering sciences to be measured.

Beyond this, the PBnE also suggests the systematic implementation of education for sustainable development in the vocational education system and in the administrative measures, as well as in relation to continuing education and qualification options – also beyond the formal education sector.

In addition, the PBnE would also like to call to mind the importance of municipal education landscapes and out-of-school education structures.

In view of the recommendations to prevent the emigration of professionals ("brain drain") and regarding immigration policy, which were once again included in the 2013 Peer Review, the Federation and the *Länder* are urged to make greater use of the opportunities offered by the Federal Recognition Act, and to develop them further, in order to better exploit the existing potential of professionals. In this context, the PBnE calls on the Federation, the *Länder* and the municipalities to more extensively internationalise their educational and scientific institutions and open them interculturally.

The PBnE supports the call of the Peer Review for a strategy for promoting IT skills in formal and informal education contexts, and welcomes the proposal to include this strategy in the next Progress Report on the national Sustainable Development Strategy in 2016.

The PBnE furthermore recommends that science and education in future be given higher priority in the national Sustainable Development Strategy.

4.14 Europe: Pointing the way to a sustainable future

The European Sustainable Development Strategy should be urgently updated, in order to be able to use it to define a binding framework for the Europe 2020 Strategy and the associated national reform plans. Germany could additionally take the initiative in establishing an international expert group for evaluating national sustainable development strategies, involving the key stakeholder groups in the process. Moreover, Germany should more strongly advocate a low-CO₂ society at the European level and initiate an "Agenda for a Sustainable Europe", together with like-minded Member States.

The PBnE considers the updating of the European Sustainable Development Strategy, i.e. of an Agenda of this kind, to be long overdue and regrets that the EU Commission is continuing to refuse to do so. In a report of its own (Bundestag printed paper 17/5295), the PBnE looked into the status of the indicators, and also the management of European sustainable development policy, finding that sufficient coordination is not guaranteed. Its talks with representatives of the EU Commission and Members of the European Parliament confirmed this finding. It therefore additionally formulated a motion (Bundestag printed paper 17/11329), in which the Federal Government is called upon to advocate the updating of the European Sustainable Development Strategy and strengthen the institutional framework. The PBnE will continue to work on the European Sustainable Development Strategy being reviewed and revised, so that it can serve as a long-term, future-oriented framework for other interdisciplinary strategies.

4.15 Germany as an international provider of system solutions for sustainable development

The experts say that Germany holds a leading position in international and interdisciplinary networks. Germany should use this position to establish sustainable development standards along the value chain, and to identify and illustrate useful areas for investments in the field of sustainable development. The public sector should see itself as a pioneer, in order to strengthen demand for sustainable products. Germany could also increasingly offer its services as a partner, in order to cooperate with others on elaborating systemic solutions in the spirit of the Sustainable Development Agenda. The motto should be "Sustainable solutions made possible by Germany".

The PBnE is aware that Germany is capable of doing more, by virtue of its committed businesses, associations, initiatives and citizens. It considers it to be its task to make German sustainability policy more congruent with the Sustainable Development Agenda, to continue to supervise the sustainability policy of the Federal Government at the national, European and international level, and to lead the dialogue with civil society. The PBnE calls for a stronger, publicly perceptible commitment of the Federal Government to the Sustainable Development Agenda, as well as a culture of sustainable development, in order to maintain future viability for coming generations.

Berlin, 12 November 2014

Andreas Jung
Chairman
