

## Knowledge and Sustainability

### ***Brief description:***

DIALOGIK researches in the course of the project Knowledge and Sustainability which conceptions of sustainable development teenagers have. This is the starting point for the conception and realization of a website which ought to advance a dialogue with and among teenagers concerning sustainable development.

### ***Background***

Talking about sustainability and sustainable development means designing the future. What kind of world do we want to leave to the next generations? Each decision or action we make today has influence on tomorrow. For this reason, the slogan for the strategy for sustainability of the German state Baden-Württemberg is “Jetzt das Morgen gestalten” (designing the future now). The concept of sustainability is examined by the DIALOGIK project group “Wir ernten was wir säen” (we reap what we sow) on behalf of the ministry for research, science and arts of Baden-Württemberg.

### ***Objectives and tasks***

This project focuses on young people in Baden-Württemberg. The DIALOGIK-survey of 1000 young people in the area of Stuttgart has shown the prevailing ideas teenagers have of their personal as well as social future. They are mainly concerned about environment, the assessment of justice, advantages and disadvantages of technical innovations as well as the personal life-style, acting in daily life and the individual commitment to society. One of the survey's questions, for instance, inquired which specific techniques should be focussed on. About 80 per cent of the surveyed young people agreed about the importance of the development of solar energy use, whereas they perceived the development of car drive engineering as less important. Strongly rejected were the topics of weapons as well as genetically modified food. A majority of the surveyed students also expressed their rejection of the development of nuclear power. These results of the survey offer the possibility to initiate an interesting discussion about sustainable developments with young people.

### ***Sustainability online – e-learning***

Sustainable life-style implies sustainable behaviour. Therefore, the awareness for possible consequences of individual actions is the prerequisite for sustainable behaviour. This thought serves as starting point for a discussion about sustainable development with young people, initiated by the project group. Via e-learning students can access information, interactive tools (such as blog and forum), latest news as well as suggestions how to put their ideas into practice. This website is called [www.wir-ernten-was-wir-saeen.de](http://www.wir-ernten-was-wir-saeen.de). It is our wish to make young people understand by means of vivid examples how they can contribute themselves to a sustainable living. Also, it is significant to diminish the complex interaction of various influences to a comprehensible concept. Enjoying to learn, to comprehend and to act is thus the main focus of this project.

### ***Acting sustainably is fun and offers new perspectives!***

Acting sustainably is often regarded as mere abstention. However, sustainability means the ability to judge the consequences of an individual's actions and to make the right decisions. Who e.g. wants to travel in conformance with responsible acting for environment and society, does not have to renounce on a vacation trip. There is an increasing number of tour operators who integrate sustainability in their offers. The aim of our project is to help young people to

be extensively informed about the subject of sustainability – ecology, economy and social themes, to enable them to reflected actions. In addition to theories and practical work, interest and fun about sustainable thinking and acting are the main point of our project work.

***Sustainability means networking and exchange of ideas***

This is why e-learning includes interactivity and exchange of ideas. Its members are to get to know each other, to exchange their opinions, ideas and visions and above all, they are to enjoy doing it. This is the only way to ensure the idea of sustainable development be embodied in our society. It is of special importance to us to ensure an exchange between virtual e-learning and the real world – outside the internet. Information, suggestions and ideas from e-learning are communicated to the “outside world” via the members. They are an impulse for discussions with friends, relatives or in school. Only network thinking and network acting can come up with the idea of sustainability.

**Key tasks of the project:**

- A quantitative survey of 1.000 teenagers.
- The accomplishment of several qualitative focus groups for understanding the semantic range of teenagers concerning sustainable development.
- Conception and implementation of a website for networking and information for an teenage audience.

**Duration:**

01.07.2008 – 30.09.2009

**Contribution of DIALOGIK:**

Coordination: Prof. Ortwin Renn; Frank Ulmer, Dipl.-Geogr.

Researchers: Alexander Sautter, M.A.

Student research assistant: Linda Maria Höss