



Call for Ideas

Sustainable Corporate Governance: Cost Consciousness – Business Benefits Idea Competition of the German Council for Sustainable Development

The internalisation, charging and reduction of external costs is a cornerstone of the green economy. Sustainable business models require as much knowledge as possible of the external, social and environmentally relevant costs which accrue in manufacturing and sales/distribution, utilisation and disposal. How can this be safeguarded?

The German Council for Sustainable Development is calling on interested parties to take part in its idea competition. Jochen Zeitz, Chief Sustainability Officer of PPR and Executive Chairman of PUMA SE, is a co-opted member of the Sustainability Council. He is the inspiration behind the project and will be accompanying it throughout.

Contestants are asked to submit ideas and innovations from the business and academic sectors. This call for ideas is directed at employees of business enterprises and social institutions as well as researchers at universities, colleges and extra-university research institutes, especially those working on research for sustainable development.

To date, this issue has been handled primarily as a challenge facing the national economy and from a scientific perspective. These days, the practice of sustainable corporate governance is opening up sweeping, innovative approaches. The RNE project seeks to harness these and, at the same time, provide the impetus for disseminating the idea.

As neither generally accepted methods nor processes and standards exist as yet for operatively and monetarily evaluating external effects, the initial approaches drawn from practical experience could be a good starting point. They identify what methodological challenges exist and the areas to be worked on using new ideas in order to arrive at sustainable solutions.

PUMA SE, under the leadership Jochen Zeitz, has taken on a pioneering role. In 2011, the company released an extensive Environmental Profit and Loss statement (EP&L) covering the impacts of greenhouse gases, water, waste, air pollution and land-use.

1. What practical examples and current findings from business management research into sustainable corporate governance are out there?
2. What methods can be applied; which need to be developed? There exists methodological diversity of assessing external effects due to material flows themselves, the divergent business fields and production samples, but also due to divergent local conditions and corporate culture. Are there ways to converge this methodological diversity towards standardisation in order to help each individual company evaluate the effects it has? What costs need to be set for a ton of CO₂, a cubic metre of water, a hectare of land, etc.? Do monetary valuations need to vary from region to region or are they the same globally (throughout the supply chain)?
3. Where do the boundaries of corporate social responsibility lie and who determines these? What quality requirements do comparative full costing need? What incentives for further developing corporate business models can be achieved through simplification (default values, standards)?

Aim of the call for ideas

You calculate the ecological footprint of companies and products? You develop processes that take into account the social and environmental-based costs of your company? You research new company cost accounting approaches and methods within a green economy?

You develop sustainable corporate governance methods and processes, taking into account the entire value-added chain, having due consideration to the operative and plant management, owners and supervisory boards as well as specific instruments? You research into the diffusion of innovations? You are a researcher or practitioner in a company and are interested in subjecting your idea to peer-to-peer testing?

We are looking for your expertise!

The call for ideas is aimed at a wide range of ideas and approaches. It seeks to cast greater public attention on these ideas and to incorporate them into the further deliberations of the German Council for Sustainable Development. Out of all the submitted entries, the best ones will be chosen for presentation.

Ideas can take the shape of contributions to further developing methods, the dissemination of methods, improvements in data management, e.g. as an outline of a research project, further developments in full costing presented as new business models, practical reports, empirical studies or concept studies.

Also based on the outcomes of the idea competition, the German Council for Sustainable Development will, following its annual conference, draft a recommendation for sustainable corporate governance.

RNE is presenting the project as part of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research's Year of Science 2012 - "Future Project Earth". The Federal Chancellery and responsible federal departments will be kept informed by RNE of how the project is progressing.

How to apply

Your ideas should be described in brief (abstract) and submitted by 15 February 2012 using the application form on our project website (www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/ideenwettbewerb).

Applicants are kindly asked to include the following details on the form:

- Abstract of the idea (no more than 3,500 characters) covering the main issues and goals as well as an outline of the methodological approach taken and the envisaged outcomes.
- Means of visually highlighting your idea using no more than 2 diagrams (a pdf file can be uploaded with the application form)
- Details about authorship, intellectual property rights and, where applicable, intended forms of cooperation
- Possible idea formats: further developing methods, dissemination of methods, improvements in data management, e.g. as an outline of a research project, ideas for further developing full costing presented as new business models, practical reports, empirical studies, concept studies.

The abstract will form the basis for pre-selecting the best ideas. A steering committee appointed by RNE and comprising scientists and practitioners from the business community will assess the submitted abstracts using a set of evaluation criteria and will select the 10 best ideas for presentation at a workshop.

In the actual competition, the best ideas will be presented to an invited audience of experts on 26 April 2012. During the presentation, which is to last no more than 12 ½ minutes, the ideas are to be conveyed clearly and informatively. The presentations should follow the US-American presentation format used at TED conferences. They will be filmed and made available to a broader public on the RNE project website.

Evaluation criteria

- Practical relevance
- Quality: improvements in the status quo? Acceleration potential? Diffusion potential?
- Innovation?

Should you have any questions, please contact the Office of the German Council for Sustainable Development at: Ideenwettbewerb@nachhaltigkeitsrat.de.

Key features

15 February 2012

An outline of your ideas (abstract) should be submitted by 15 February 2012 using the application form on our project website.

2 March 2012 in Berlin

A steering committee appointed by RNE and comprising scientists and practitioners from the business community will select the 10 best ideas.

26 April 2012 in Potsdam

The applicants with the best abstracts will be invited to hold an informative presentation of their ideas to an invited audience of experts at a conference to be held on this date. The presentation will be limited to 12 ½ minutes which must not be exceeded under any circumstances. A group of external experts will manage the selection process to determine the best ideas to be presented at RNE's annual conference.

25 June 2012 in Berlin

The best ideas will be presented at RNE's annual conference.

Members of the steering committee

Prof. Dr. Alexander Bassen	University of Hamburg
Dr. Daniela Büchel	REWE AG
Dr. Rainer Griebhammer	Öko-Institut e.V.
Prof. Dr. Edeltraud Günther	TU Dresden
Dr. Reiner Hengstmann	PUMA SE
Prof. Dr. Thomas Hirth	Fraunhofer Gesellschaft
Matthias Kopp	WWF
Dr. Meike Niedbal	Deutsche Bahn AG
Dr. Ulf Santjer	PUMA SE
Nicole Scheer	Fraport AG
Thomas Schulz	Project holder in the DLR; Environment, Culture, Sustainability
Dr. Andreas Sturm	Ellipson
Dr. Günther Bachmann	RNE (Director)
Dr. Sibyl Steuer	RNE