



EKD-Texte 130

“Lent to us is the Star on which we live”

The Agenda 2030: a Challenge to the
Churches

english



Evangelische Kirche
in Deutschland

“Lent to us is the Star on which we live“

The Agenda 2030: a Challenge
to the Churches

A Discussion Paper authored by the Advisory
Commission of the EKD on Sustainable Development

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbiographie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

Published by

Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)

Herrenhäuser Straße 12 | D - 30419 Hannover

www.ekd.de

September 2018

Download: www.ekd.de/en/Texts-802.htm

Cover picture: © Ippicture/www.pixabay.com

Translation: Astrid Quick

Layout: stm | media GmbH

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Preliminary Remarks

We are living in a time of global crises which increasingly place question marks over the future of life on our planet. The challenges faced by the international community are enormous. In view of the fact that more than 800 million people are still living under the threat of hunger and that, every day, more than 20,000 people are dying of hunger, the international community is clearly a long way from satisfying the basic needs of all people. Climate change is progressing and exacerbating the gulf between the rich and the poor, given that its consequences mainly affect those who are least able to protect themselves and who have contributed the least to its progression. Present and future resource scarcities are leading to an increase in violent conflicts. Due to the transgression of the so-called planetary boundaries in many areas, with all their relevant consequences – in particular through man-made climate change – people and nature across the world are affected both in the medium and the long term. The survival of humankind, as well as the continued existence of non-human nature, as we know it today, is in jeopardy.

This is not only a challenge for politics, but also for civil society. This also applies to the Evangelical Church in Germany, for whom this global situation poses a challenge. We see nature as God's creation; this is why we cannot fail to be affected by that which is destroying it. We believe the individual is made in the image of God and thus imbued with an inviolable dignity. We can therefore never condone the violation of the basic needs of so many people.

For the churches, the quest for a sustainable development, one which is fit for the future, is by no means new. Even in 1975, the World Council of Churches took up the clarion call issued by the Club of Rome concerning the limits of growth, and called for a “just, participatory and sustainable society” at its General Assembly in Nairobi.¹ Thus, the churches within the WCC were the first to furnish the global agenda of the 20th century with the notion of sustainability. It was the UN who established the notion of sustainability as a guiding principle for an ecologically and socially compatible development fit for the future via the Brundtland Report in 1987, and the Rio Conference

¹ Wolfram Stierle, Dietrich Werner, Martin Heider (1996): Ethik für das Leben. 100 Jahre ökumenische Wirtschafts- und Sozial-ethik, p. 551.

in 1992, making it a new and important benchmark; and with the adoption of the Sustainability Goals in 2015, it became an obligatory guideline for all nations. However, it was the churches of the WCC, who, for internal, theological reasons, substituted the notion of sustainability with the expression “Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation”.

In terms of content however, the Conciliar Process addressed the topics of today’s sustainability agenda that had already been voiced in the 1980s, which amounted to: equitable structures and relationships across the globe; so as to ensure peaceful and safe conditions and preserve all created life. In this field, the member churches within the World Council of Churches were also trailblazers and a vanguard for both the public and political discourse of the late 20th century.

In 2015, the sustainability discourse gained much vital momentum through the adoption of the sustainability goals by the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. Far-reaching goals were defined for 17 policy areas, that were to be accomplished by 2030. By comparison with the Millennium Development Goals, these sustainability goals demonstrate progress, since they: are further-reaching and more radical, cover more subject areas, amongst which ecological matters feature prominently; and call upon all nations to contribute, including Germany. It is of great significance that more than 190 states – a mixture of industrial, newly industrialising and developing countries, with clearly diverging interests – were able to agree upon this far-reaching, common agenda.

As Chairman of the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany, I emphatically welcome this agenda, even though I also see its contradictions and conflict of objectives. I expressly support the commitment of the Federal Government in Germany to implement the sustainability goals and expect that this commitment will become even more consistent and coherent. We, as the Evangelical Church in Germany, wish to advise and support the debate in the political arena, in a critical, yet constructive manner. The text at hand offers a sound basis on which to do so, as well as numerous suggestions.

Recently, it can be seen that the role of social values, culture and religion are gaining significance in the discourse surrounding sustainability. This is, in part, due to the fact that it is not only a redirection of the political arena which needs to take place, in order for sustainable development to be implemented successfully, but first and fore-

most, it is a radical change of value systems and a comprehensive change in mentality and culture which needs to occur.

As the Protestant Church in Germany, we are distinctly aware of the special responsibility which we bear for such a radical change of values and culture. We take this responsibility on board deliberately and gratefully, sustained as it is by the promises of God and, at the same time, his call to repentance. In the implementation process of Agenda 2030, of which we wish to be admonishers, mediators and drivers, our aim is to urge people to turn around; we wish to mediate in areas where there is a conflict of objectives within society and strive for fair solutions. In addition, we wish to become more sustainable and more credible in our own ecclesial practices. If we succeed in so doing, we can then become instruments of sustainable development and agents of radical change; just as the churches in the World Council of Churches were in the 1980s.

I am grateful for the many diverse initiatives, groups, churches, ecclesial and diaconal institutions within the Protestant Church which are already undertaking this quest. I thank the members of the *Advisory Commission on Sustainable Development* for working out this encouraging, guiding text and hope that it meets with a varied and resounding response.

Hanover, September 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Heinrich Bedford-Strohm". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm

Chair of the EKD-Council

1. What sustains us

*The Earth is the Lord's,
lent to us is the star on which we live;
so be prepared to serve,
Deferred is the time given to us.²*

1.1 The Gift of Creation and the Christian Response

"Then God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen 1:31; NKJV). Like a repetitive refrain, this biblical story about the origin of all life is very familiar to many of us. We believe in God who fashioned this world well and who means to bring it to completion. At the same time, the Bible tells us about the other side of creation; the side that is dependent upon reconciliation: that side features hardship and fratricide, the Flood and urban megalomania, famine and slavery. Time and time again, it is apparent that God has great confidence in, and expects much of people. The psalms of the congregations, the experiences of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Jacob, Moses, Job and many others, give an account of this. Especially in the disquieting experiences of life, God has proved himself, time and time again, to be the one *"who keeps faith forever"* (Ps 146:6; NRSV). With God's help, people are strong. In numerous stories, the Bible reports how God continuously creates new beginnings, with people and also with creation, including: the liberation from slavery in Egypt; freedom from exile in Babylon; the covenant with the people of Israel; the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and finally, the enduring promise: *"Behold, I will do a new thing"* (Is 43:19; 65:17; Rev 21:5; NKJV). The *love of God to the world* (John 3:16), which is recognisable in the creation story and many accounts in Exodus, and which is also evidenced in Jesus Christ, make us grateful and encourage us to testify, in our time, that God's instruction to *"... fill the earth and subdue it"* (Gen 1:28) has been misused as a carte blanche to exploit creation. Christians cannot deny that misusing creation has contributed to exploitation, suffering and destruction, on an unprecedented scale,

2 Hymn no. 634, verse 1, Hymn Book of the Evangelical Church of Hesse Electorate-Waldeck. German: Lied 634, Vers 1, Evangelisches Gesangbuch der Evangelischen Kirche von Kurhessen-Waldeck.

as well as to persistent poverty and hunger, outrageous inequality, wars fed by arms exports, rubbish in the oceans, acid in the rain, nitrate in the soil and far too much CO₂ in the air. In the light of God’s loving care for the world, Christians recognise their responsibility for the “*groaning of creation*” (after Rom 8:22), and yet, a turnaround and a new start are possible.

In our time, people are violating the ecological boundaries of this planet; not individually but collectively, with almost all of us doing our part to go beyond ecologically healthy limits. Some therefore speak of the “Anthropocene” as the new era that has just begun; in which humankind has become the decisive factor of influence for the future of creation, in terms of biological developments and the evolution of the atmosphere. It is the “advanced” countries in particular which do not have a sustainable way of life and whose lifestyles, especially those of the middle and upper classes in the wealthy nations, most affect the planet. The elites in poorer countries however, also carry responsibility for transgressing planetary boundaries. Whoever claims today that the salvation of a declining world is solely God’s business, is speculating on that which Dietrich Bonhoeffer termed “cheap grace”: not making oneself available for the outworking of God’s loving care for the world in Jesus Christ. His loving care for the world protects us from false claims to power and reminds us that we must also accept that we are creatures ourselves. Thereby, our responsibility acquires a new appearance: It is not so much a claim to mastery, but rather, in Christ, to both *serve* and *conserve* God’s creation. Wherever sustainability is concerned, we cannot whitewash our actions, since we are guilty of wrongdoing: We are not fulfilling our responsibility towards creation; we do not love our neighbours as ourselves and we are not taking good care of the gift of creation. At the same time, we believe as Christians that nothing is greater than the love of God which he has shown to us in Jesus Christ. Gratefully and joyfully, we respond by living lives in responsibility before God.

Both, our human experiences of lowliness, as well as the promises of God, make the Christian realism possible. The latter does not deny that there are abysses and disasters, resignation and helplessness, but, at the same time, this realism also gives us confidence and guidance. It opens up our horizons so we can see, judge and act globally. Endowed with our lives and their possibilities, we face the questions of our time: “What should we do? What should remain the same? What needs to change?” Sustained by God’s assurances, as pilgrims on earth, Christians can embark upon the way of life, peace and the integrity of creation in a grateful, happy and inspired, self-critical and ecumenical way. Gratitude is an eye-opener and a source of strength for the paths towards the reformation and transformation of the world ahead of us.

People who trust in the promises of the Old and the New Testament know God to be a reliable partner who keeps his promises. We freshly understand that the Greek word “oikoumenē” has always referred to the entirety of the inhabited earth. We desire for there to be new and fresh ways of including this ecumenical perspective into our viewpoints, as we look at the world from the vantage of sustainability.

1.2 Gratitude as a Way of Life

All our actions are motivated by an attitude which is greater than mere calculation for reasons of expediency. As Christians we believe in one God, who is like a loving mother and a loving father to all people. He desires us to treat one another as sisters and brothers and to preserve his creation in its integrity and beauty (cf. Message of Vancouver, WCC, 1983). God wants all people to live a good life and to have it “*more abundantly*” (John 10:10). The psalmist reminds us: “*The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it*” (Ps 24:1). Across the globe, Christians are committed to the ecumenical “Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation”. Our own contributions to establish a sustainable development which is fit for the future can, likewise, build upon these achievements.

Life on our planet has its boundaries and, at present, we are transgressing them. The exhortation to “carry on!” is no longer feasible. It is increasingly true that less would be more in the lives of all: less rubbish, less noise, less exclusion, less destruction of species, fewer fine particles, fewer concreted areas and fewer antibiotics in animal farming. Less can be more: the ancient wisdom of an “ethics of sufficiency” is becoming freshly evident. The Christian faith gives us the freedom to impose limits upon ourselves. It helps us to recognise that an active levying of limits upon our own possibilities and interests is an expression of Christian liberation, which does us good. Occasionally, such an “ethics of self-limitation” is caricatured as being joyless and self-mortifying; as weakness or austerity. However, the truth is that self-limitation, wrought on the basis of freedom, enables us to have an attitude that provokes meaningful questions: In a lifestyle of abundance, what do I lack? What do I have, use or consume in excess? Where is self-denial beneficial for me? What is the right measure? At which point do my actions become an encumbrance upon others and burden our environment? What is it that people are lacking across the globe, in order to satisfy existential basic needs and to live in safety and dignity? What has that got to do with me? What are animals, and the entire created world, lacking? In such a way, we rediscover that a great deal of things which do not come with a price tag, are of great

value: an abundance of time, a successful life, the love of one’s neighbour, fellowship, spirituality and encounters with other people, creatures and nature. So much of what we cannot buy is valuable. Asking for the right measure, compassion and kind-heartedness towards all people and the whole of creation opens up the way for us to be thankful in this world and to co-operate with others joyfully, in responsible freedom.

The Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, which was adopted by the United Nations in 2015, is for us a reason to be grateful. It was termed the transformation agenda. It calls for a turning away from lifestyles which cannot be universalised. Since it is a self-commitment of the United Nations, it has bearings for human history that are comparable to the Charta of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948. A society which takes seriously the fact that humankind was created in the image of God can never be a class society. People have equal value and equal rights. Accordingly, one of the guiding principles of “Agenda 2030” is: “Leave no one behind!” Fairness and justice are shown between nations and generations, as well as between social classes and individuals. It is the exact opposite of a policy of national egotism.

We are supported by our faith in a sensuous world, in which “*righteousness and peace will kiss each other*” (Ps 85 : 11). We are rediscovering religious traditions which are benign to creation. We are grateful that it is natural for us to embark upon an ecumenical path together whereby we accept great challenges such as the limitation of climate change, the preservation of creation or the protection of the universal human rights, trusting in God’s love for the world. The words which Pope Francis included in his Encyclical Letter “*Laudato si*” concerning the great challenges for the transformation of our world, were spoken at the right time to admonish us and yet, characterised by deep joy, they also stir us to engage.³

1.3 On Values and Prices

In our present time, it is becoming obvious that, in previous times, our lifestyle has neither been ecumenical nor sustainable, but rather based upon a view of a world in which the “environment” was considered to be an object; a world “for sale“, in which all other values were overshadowed by price and function. This includes the intrinsic value of creation, the concern for the suffering of fellow creatures or the endeavours

³ Cf. Chapter 4.2 below.

of many people across the globe to reduce the inequalities which rob us of opportunities in life. Worldwide, too many people are forced to work in conditions which people of the industrialized countries would never accept, considering them to be inhumane. Accepting the exploitation of others, however, is unfair, unjust and uncaring. Subtly, there has been a spreading of a monoculture in which matters such as low prices, high levels of growth, quantity over quality and advantages for individuals are predominant. It was not always thus. People can do better. In other times, in the ancient Greek world for example, or amongst people such as St Francis of Assisi, the natural scientist Alexander von Humboldt or the theologian and doctor Albert Schweitzer, there was an enquiry into the nexuses and successes of life, the art of living with limitations and the standards by which to measure that which is humane. Although modern ways of thinking are abundant, life has become poor as a result of forgetting about nature and trusting in the economy's ability to self-organise. Significantly, nature became an object of analysis, exploitation and calculation. Had we put the necessary framework regulations in place, as far as all ecological and social issues are concerned, the question would still remain as to whether we can be sure that the right rules will bring about the common good and protect the life chances of subsequent generations from today's self interest? Such thinking draws its legitimacy from the notion that, through good rules which resemble an "invisible hand", egotism can be transformed into the prosperity of all nations. As far as complex questions are concerned, can there be rules without loopholes? The Scottish economist Adam Smith, who is frequently quoted as being the progenitor of this methodological individualism, categorically considered humankind to be motivated by far more than self-interest. Pragmatically, he made the case for utilising the unquestionable economical potential of the division of labour and market prices, without losing sight of that which constitutes a good life: the human ability to demonstrate compassion, that is to feel and empathize with others. People are able to do more than calculate. The human capacity to co-operate beyond scheming and calculating promotes and strengthens a sense of community; it is for this reason that neurologists, economists, development experts and many others of our day and age are working to re-discover the true value of co-operation as an essential for survival.

Therefore, although a market is important, it should not have the final or sole say where sustainability is concerned. The value of creation cannot be assessed exclusively through market mechanisms and price tags. Value and price are not the same thing. Christians can choose to calculate with market prices. Yet, at the same time, they are free to allow themselves to be guided by other factors. They can ask whether the free market is fair? Are sustainable investments the better options for pension

funds? What are the correlations between private property and common goods? Is it unavoidable for husbandry to be painful to the farm animals? Should hospitals resemble profit centres? What kind of “gains” should schools yield? Is the value of creation greater when it is viewed as a disposal site, a warehouse or a holiday paradise? There are good reasons to campaign for an inspired, more responsible and sustainable structuring of the markets and globalisation. Christians have the freedom to question publicly, following the prophetic tradition, a prevailing understanding of the “games” which society plays, as well as the respective rules.

The international community is facing great challenges. For the transformation towards sustainable development, as described in Agenda 2030, all social groups must offer their contribution: politics and the economy, society and family. The EKD also considers itself to be obliged to instigate educational processes and practices informed by solidarity, thereby promoting the transformation and the implementation of the goals of sustainable development. We are also challenged to take responsibility in our respective position. “We”, in this case, is the Church, with its congregations as well as its ecclesial and diaconal institutions. We can, and must, do more. Our biblical commission gives us the special responsibility to take on the role of admonisher, mediator and driver for a sustainable development in the service of the integrity of creation; and to campaign for this task to be undertaken.

2. What we appreciate

2.1 The Comprehensive Expectations of the Agenda 2030

In September 2015, the world's Heads of State and Government jointly approved the new "Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development" in the General Assembly of the United Nations. Within the framework of the Agenda, 179 states committed themselves to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The Agenda is based upon the recognition that the global challenges of our times can only be jointly addressed and that the guiding principle of sustainable development has to be consistently applied in all states and to all areas of policy.

The new goals revisit the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁴ and extend them so as to become goals for all countries, including goals to combat poverty and hunger, goals to promote good health, education and gender equality, and also goals to ensure the availability of water and sanitation for all. Goals to ensure access to energy, promote economic growth and decent work, infrastructure and innovation, urban development and a reduction of inequality within and between countries have been newly added. Aspects of environmental protection have been consistently integrated and additionally covered by goals which specifically address the climate, oceans, terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity. Another new goal is the promotion of peace and good governance. Finally, a specific goal has been negotiated concerning the means to raise finance for the implementation of the goals, whereby, at this point, traditional conflicts between donor and developing countries became apparent. Several indicators for all 169 targets have now been developed and agreed.

⁴ In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted in the 55th General Assembly of the United Nations. The eight MDGs included reducing extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV, Aids, Malaria and other diseases, ensuring ecological sustainability as well as developing a global partnership for development. They were to be achieved by 2015; however, this was only accomplished with regard to a small number of MDGs. Therefore, the concerns of the MDGs were incorporated into the SDGs and, in many cases, extended through the addition of more challenging objectives.

THE GLOBAL GOALS

For Sustainable Development



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Overall, Agenda 2030 makes substantial progress, for the following reasons:

- it calls for a comprehensive “transformation of our world” (this is the title of Agenda 2030);
- it follows a holistic approach and strives to achieve human welfare within the planetary boundaries, including the economic, ecological and social dimensions of sustainability and seeking to overcome disjointed ways of thinking and acting in separate spheres of responsibility, as well as addressing a cultural and spiritual motivation by reference to “mother earth”;
- it was signed by all Heads of State and Government, and will apply to all countries across the globe, including the industrialised nations;
- it describes a new developmental paradigm, according to which all states are facing profound processes of change, and therefore need to design any structural changes needed;
- it particularly focusses on those who are the weakest and most vulnerable across all social groups (“leave no one behind”);
- it seeks to overcome inequality and realise human rights in their full breadth;
- it has created a spirit of optimism and aims for all-inclusive participation, since, alongside the governments, important groups and other stakeholders from civil society, the economy and science are also called to work together to achieve the SDGs.

Opposing interests and the pressure to achieve a compromise in an international negotiation process will always also produce weaknesses. Thus, some critiques argue that Agenda 2030 has not categorically challenged growth paradigms and capitalism. In addition, with regard to some SDGs, the UN member states were only able to agree some rather unambitious targets and indicators which appear to have little meaning.

The central body which accompanies the Agenda 2030, and follows up and reviews the implementation process, is the so-called High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF, established 2013), in which all states are represented. The HLPF meets annually for eight days in New York and, every four years, the Heads of State and Government meet for an additional two days. The follow-up processes are geared not so much towards control than towards joint learning processes and the exchange of experiences; of “good practices” as well as impediments encountered during the implementation process. Participation in the national reviews at the HLPF is voluntary; since 2016, more than 100 states have given an account of their national implementation efforts and – even more importantly – have also initiated processes of co-ordination, consultation and implementation at national level.⁵ Nevertheless, many states have not participated in these processes, and the quality of the reports and procedures clearly needs to be improved. In order for the HLPF to do justice to its mandate of exercising a political leadership role for the consistent implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, on the basis of these processes, it should courageously tackle the reforms planned for 2019/20.

2.2 Respecting Ecological Boundaries and Securing Social Capital

Some of the goals of Agenda 2030 might conflict with one another, such as universal access to energy and an effective fight against climate change. In the report, which was published in 2017,⁶ the Club of Rome emphasised that the achievement of numerous Agenda 2030 goals which serve human welfare will substantially increase global warming, as well as threaten biodiversity, should conventional development patterns and growth strategies continue. Thus far, partial success attained in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), within the areas of

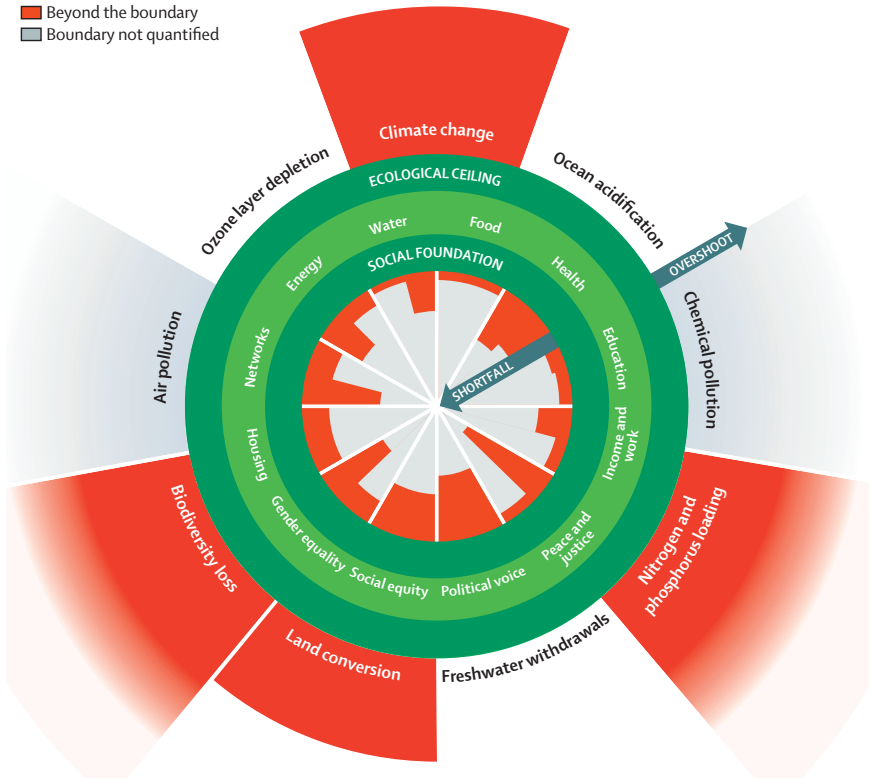
⁵ Cf. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>.

⁶ Club of Rome (2017): *Come on! Capitalism, Short-Termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet*.

poverty reduction or the improvement of the supply of energy, have always been accompanied by a heightening of the pressures on our ecosystems. As yet, none of the nation states have been able to satisfy the needs of their citizens by using resources in a globally sustainable way.⁷ Such problematic developments must be avoided in the future. An improved provision of energy in developing countries may be compatible with climate protection, provided that these countries are supported in their expansion of renewable energies, rather than in their investment into fossil fuel.

The Agenda’s strong focus on coherence is very positive. The necessity to bring together ecological sustainability and human development has been discussed for a long time. As depicted by the so-called “Doughnut” below, it is important to create an ecologically safe *and* socially just living environment for the entirety of humankind. This will not only require us to respect ecological boundaries in our use of natural resources, but also to secure social capital. Therefore, the “Doughnut” firstly illustrates that we should not overstep the so-called planetary boundaries which we are already violating (see red fields). Secondly, the protection of the earth’s ecological systems should not be wrought at the expense of social minimum standards, in particular in the countries of the South. Thus, the less developed nations should not be encumbered with the cost of climate protection, since they are already suffering disproportionately from the consequences of climate change. Rather, they need to be supported by the industrialised nations in the measures which they adopt for climate protection, as well as the measures undertaken to adapt to the consequences of climate change caused by the industrialised nations. The “Doughnut” illustrates quite clearly that in some areas, the ecological boundaries have already been crossed (causing climate change, loss of biodiversity, nitrogen and phosphate pollution, land conversion), whilst, at the same time, the social capital has clearly been neglected (i. e. deficiency in the areas of nutrition, water, education, health care, peace etc.). Considering all these factors, a clear agenda emerges: to respect the planetary boundaries *and* to secure basic political, economic, social and cultural human rights. Herein lies the special challenge of Agenda 2030 to bring both these requirements together.

7 Cf. Daniel W. O’Neill, Andrew L. Fanning, William F. Lamb und Julia Steinberger (2018): A good life for all within planetary boundaries, in: nature sustainability; <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-018-0021-4>.



Source: The Lancet Planetary Health, Kate Raworth and Christian Guthrie
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 DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(17\)30028-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(17)30028-1)
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3. What we are seeking

3.1 Perspectives of the Ecumenical World on Sustainability

For us as Church, Agenda 2030 resembles a treasure which we have yet to explore, as it revisits many of the demands that the ecumenical movement has made since the 1970s, especially in the „Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation“:⁸

- The General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, in 1968, focussed on the quest for new lifestyles which are not indifferent to the suffering of people through war and exploitation, which break the cycle of violence and counter-violence and which open up to innovation and technology.⁹
- It was the member churches of the World Council of Churches who placed the term “sustainability” firmly on the global agenda at a World Conference on Science and Technology in 1974, as well as at the WCC’s General Assembly in Nairobi in 1975.¹⁰ This term was used to denote a society which designs its internal and external conditions to be both just and participatory in a social and ecological respect. It was inspired by a lecture held by the biologist Charles Birch, who started out from the assumption of equality, in principle, concerning the subject matters which pertain to justice and ecology, and called for a theologically reasoned departure from a technocratic-instrumental understanding of nature.
- In 1983, the „Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation“ was adopted at the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, where the topics found today in the Agenda 2030 had already been brought into

⁸ Cf. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm (2001): *Schöpfung in der Ökumenischen Bewegung*, Göttingen; idem: *Die Entdeckung der Ökologie in der ökumenischen Bewegung* (2008), in: Hans-Georg Link, Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz (Hrsg.), *Hoffnungswege. Wegweisende Impulse des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen aus sechs Jahrzehnten*, Frankfurt, p. 321–347.

⁹ Cf. Wolfgang Stierle, Dietrich Werner, Martin Heider (1996): *Ethik für das Leben: 100 Jahre Ökumenische Wirtschafts- und Sozialethik*, p. 272 ff. (It may be an alternative, but for many people, it is not achievable: The Uppsala Report 1968. Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala 4.–20. July 1968, ed. by Norman Goodall; German edition by Walter Müller-Römhald, Geneva 1968, p. 93–97.)

¹⁰ Loc. cit., p. 550 f.

a coherent context. The concluding statement made by the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in Seoul, in 1990, “Now is the time”, emphasises the indivisibility of justice and peace, with particular regards to the equality of all ethnicities and people groups, gender equality, the guiding principle of the option for the poor and human rights, as well as respect for the earth, since the earth belongs to God.

- In the joint statement by the German Catholic Bishops’ Conference and the EKD Council on the economic and social situation in Germany, which was published in 1997, the option for the poor was declared to be the essential benchmark for “all action and decisions taken, and to be taken, in society, politics and economy”. All action and “decision-making should be gauged by the extent to which it concerns, benefits and empowers the poor”.¹¹ Whilst in this statement, the focus predominantly related to aspects of justice and participation, it was later widened so as to include the relationship between environmental destruction and injustice.
- The ecumenical debate concerning an “Economy in the Service of Life“ was also taken up by the EKD. This was demonstrated in two declarations, which were adopted by the Synod in Bremen in 2008 and which, given the financial, economic and climate crisis, called for a fundamental change in terms of economic system and lifestyle. These stated that the division of a population into those who are in need and those who are wealthy, needed to be overcome, that natural resources needed to be preserved for future generations and that the sustainability of the ecological and economic systems required safeguarding.¹²
- The memorandum published by the EKD Council in 2009 “Turning to Life. Sustainable Development in the Context of Climate Change” emphasises that, in this age of climate change, the concept of ‘development’ needed to be reviewed and guided by the principles of justice and sustainability, the right to life shared by all humankind and the intrinsic value of non-human nature. This memorandum published guidelines for just and sustainable climate and development policies and

11 Cf. For a Future Founded on Solidarity and Justice. A Statement of the Evangelical Church in Germany and the German Bishops’ Conference on the Economic and Social Situation in Germany, 1997, Hanover/Bonn 1997, p. 44f; www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/.../gem-texte/GT_09A-en.pdf.

12 Cf. EKD-Synod 2008 „Resolution on firm regulations for the global financial markets/ Beschluss zu verbindlichen Regeln für die globalen Finanzmärkte“; https://www.ekd.de/synode2008/beschluesse/beschluss_kapitalmarkt.html and Statement of EKD-Synod 2008 „Klimawandel – Wasserwandel – Lebenswandel“; https://www.ekd.de/synode2008/beschluesse/beschluss_kundgebung_klima_wasser_lebenswandel.html.

their core spheres of action, including energy and transport policy, food security, adaptation to climate change, refugees and migration; and these are now found in Agenda 2030.¹³

- The necessity of strengthening international co-operation and reforming existing institutions of the United Nations was the core focus of the EKD-Study on “Sustainable Development and Global Governance“; Agenda 2030 also puts great emphasis on these topics by way of SDGs 10 (reduction of inequalities), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and 1 (partnership for the achievement of the goals).¹⁴
- The challenge of 2009, to review the notion of development, was finally taken up by a study authored by an Advisory Commission on Sustainable Development in 2015 („... that they may have life, and have it abundantly“) that substantiated the necessity for all nations to undertake a social and ecological transformation, which is one of the basic concepts underpinning the Agenda 2030. This study defines, as core fields of action, the safeguarding of peace, the implementation of human rights, the improvement of the coherence of policies and the strengthening of global co-operation, as well as engendering a new orientation for the co-operation with developing nations.
- In 2013, the General Assembly of the WCC in Busan adopted the “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace“, which was understood to be a search for new spiritual avenues, both in a literal sense as well as figuratively, by the member churches, as they sought to implement it in the lives of their churches.

In all these texts and calls, sustainability is understood to be a concept according to which a generation may satisfy their needs, provided that the fulfillment of these needs for subsequent generations is not jeopardised and that the ecological planetary boundaries of this earth are respected. Therefore, the EKD advocates a concept of ‘strong sustainability’, according to which nature capital and natural assets need to be maintained at a constantly stable level, if not strengthened.¹⁵

13 Cf. Turning to Life. Sustainable Development in the Context of Climate Change; in German: Umkehr zum Leben. Nachhaltige Entwicklung im Zeichen des Klimawandels. Denkschrift des Rates der EKD, Gütersloh 2009; <https://www.ekd.de/klimawandel.htm>.

14 In the Path of Righteousness there is Life. Sustainable Development requires Global Growth. archiv.ekd.de/ekdtext117_global_governance_en.pdf.

15 In practice, this definition implies the need to renaturalise damaged ecological systems, to afforest and rebuild depleted fish stocks. Cf. the EKD study: ... That they may have life, and have it abundantly. A Contribution to the Debate about new Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development. A Study by the Advisory Commission, 2015; EKD Text 122. archiv.ekd.de/ekdtext_122_guiding_principles.html

3.2 Requirements beyond the Agenda 2030

Similar to Agenda 2030, the Advisory Commission on Sustainable Development argued, in 2015, that a radical transition was necessary within the economy and society of all nations, in order to make it possible for all people to have a decent life. In so doing, the wealthiest nations should “take on responsibility and lead the way, since, on average: they still manifest the highest, consumer-related use of natural resources; they have the highest absolute consumption of natural resources in historical terms; it is not easy to refuse other societies that which our societies have laid claim to for decades; and finally, because the wealthiest nations are still ascribed a certain exemplary function. In the near future, even the large, emergent, developing nations will have to take on more responsibility in this comprehensive sense: for their own population as well as for countries which are worse off than themselves, as well as for global common properties in the world of today and in the future.”¹⁶ Therefore, there is a large degree of congruence between the Protestant and ecumenical statements and the Agenda 2030, in terms of their understanding of sustainable development and the transformation that is necessary to accomplish these Sustainable Development Goals of the UN.

However, there are also recognisable differences between the Agenda 2030 and the thought processes of the churches in the ecumenical world. Although the demands of the Sustainable Development Goals are far-reaching and bold, the leading questions and explorations of the churches go beyond the calls made by the Agenda 2030. These are questions to which the churches do not yet have exhaustive answers, but which need to be discussed and addressed, both within and outside of the churches, if the great transformation, to which the Agenda 2030 aspires, is to be achieved.

Of particular importance is the matter of the interrelations between wealth and growth, as well as the even more basic question as to how wealth can be defined and measured. Agenda 2030 does not adequately answer this question. SDG 8 calls for “sustained economic growth”, which means relieving the pressure on the ecosystems whilst decreasing inequality; however, the question as to how exactly this is to be understood remains unclear. In addition, the reference to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shows that a measurement parameter is being utilised that is clearly inadequate for the measurement of wealth, as well as being outdated in the sustainabil-

¹⁶ Loc. cit. p. 86.

ity debate. There is a concession in the Agenda 2030, that additional measurement parameters are needed if one is to measure wealth accurately. However, during the negotiations for the draft of the Agenda 2030, differences of opinion emerged which were not fully resolved at the time and were, instead, covered up with formulaic compromises. For the churches, the essential matter of interest is the definition of a good life – what is a part of a good life and what is not.

Closely related to this issue is the question as to how natural resources can be conserved and how an “ethics of sufficiency” can be implemented. It is striking to note that the notion of sufficiency is almost undiscoverable in the Agenda 2030. Rather, measures for a turnaround towards sustainability and efficiency seem to be of prime importance. It is merely a target related to Goal 12 “Responsible Consumption”, which speaks of avoidance and reduction in the context of waste management. However, it will not be possible to achieve the goals of sustainable development – in particular those which relate to the maintenance of ecological balance – without sufficiency strategies and without reducing the use of natural resources, reducing production, consumption, energy consumption, mobility etc. It is generally striking that such sufficiency strategies cannot be found in statements on sustainability that have been made in the political and economic arena. The churches have, for a considerable time, been taking an additional step by which they have been calling, very clearly, for the respect of boundaries and a different practice in line with the “ethics of sufficiency”.¹⁷

Another point which we find missing in Agenda 2030 is the question as to which cultural processes of change are actually needed to reach the transformation required. For the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is not only resolute governments which are willing to take action that are needed, but also a fundamental change of culture and values within societies, in which attentiveness to creation, the needs of other people and future generations, as well as reflecting upon the value of life above and beyond economic growth and consumption, gain importance.

In this regard, the role of religion and spirituality should not be underestimated. As churches, we mean to, and can, offer important contributions for such explorations. Whilst we cannot offer ready-made solutions, we can initiate the search for new ave-

¹⁷ Cf. The EKD study of 2009: *Turning to Life. Sustainable Development in the Context of Climate Change*; German: *Umkehr zum Leben*, p. 156, as well as initiatives such as “Umkehr zum Leben” (a platform presenting information, material and events), “anders wachsen” (a campaign advocating a different economic model) and the so-called “Klimafasten” (a day of fasting for the climate); www.umkehr-zum-leben.de, www.anders-wachsen.de and www.klimafasten.de.

nues or contribute to them. In these exploratory movements, we will allow the great biblical visions of the future world of God to guide us; a world in which justice and peace finally prevail, in which tears are wiped away and violence and death are conquered. “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth... God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain...” (Rev 21 : 1 and 4). These visions give us the strength and the perseverance to take a stand for this future kingdom of peace, and to do so even today, in our present world, marred as it is by violence and injustice.

4. What we expect

4.1 Implementation of the Agenda 2030 – in, with and through Germany

It is the *governments* of the member states of the United Nations who are primarily responsible for the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The Federal Government of Germany has been recognised as having played a positive role in the negotiation process for the draft of the Agenda 2030 and has, at many points, supported ambitious, comprehensive objectives. The expectations were thereby raised that it would now also implement the Agenda 2030 in an exemplary fashion. In the light of the Agenda 2030, it is evident that the Federal Republic of Germany is a nation which requires a truly sustainable development. Within the context of the German sustainability strategy, the German government has ascertained that we in Germany are, in many ways, still a long way from achieving a sustainable life and economy, as well as the sustainable management of natural resources. The strategy reveals that, in numerous areas, there is a great need for action so as to achieve the national sustainability goals, some of which were laid down in 2002. The challenges for Germany lie on a national, as well as on an international level. Regarding the latter, it is not only development co-operation that is required – i. e. the implementation of the Agenda 2030 *with* Germany – but also the involvement of commerce and supply chains – i. e. the implementation of the Agenda 2030 *through* Germany. In nearly every policy area, the relevant protagonists need to discuss how Germany can support the international processes and partner nations in a way that will enable the SDGs to be reached. Similarly, it needs to be checked where there are incoherencies and if, by any means, Germany stands in the way of the achievement of the goals or indirectly obstructs these processes.

The fact that the new German sustainability strategy, which was adopted by the German government in January 2017, is clearly guided in its structure by the 17 SDGs and has a more international orientation than the previous strategy, is to be welcomed. 13 subject areas and 30 indicators have been newly added and several others are to be developed, for example, the goal of sustainable consumption and sustainable production has been freshly incorporated. In addition, topics such as distributive justice and the fight against corruption have been included in the strategy and, for the first time, have been given concrete indicators.

4.1.1 Expectations towards the German Government regarding implementation

The German government has committed itself to implement the Agenda 2030 in full and has called upon all other states to do the same. However, the new German sustainability strategy does not follow the Agenda 2030 completely, nor does it include the correlations and interdependencies discussed in the latter. Whilst the 169 targets of the Agenda 2030 are mentioned, not all of them are followed up by measures which the German government could have put in place. In any case, the German sustainability strategy does not provide any information regarding this matter. Whilst the Agenda 2030 has 232 indicators, the new German sustainability strategy has 63 - almost double the number of the old strategy, but merely a small selection of the indicators agreed by the international community for 2030.

There may be good reasons for this fact: Not all the indicators of the Agenda 2030 are relevant for Germany. Some of the indicators of the Germany sustainability strategy are more conclusive and more detailed than those agreed at an international level. In addition, the decision taken by the German government to focus its sustainability strategy upon a limited number of core topics, and to develop these in greater depth, is quite reasonable. In this way, whilst the German sustainability strategy may not be the only instrument for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 - in, with and through Germany – it may well be the most important. Greater clarity is needed as to how the topics of Agenda 2030 which do not feature in the German sustainability strategy are to be addressed by the German government.

4.1.2 Addressing Goal Conflicts

The Agenda 2030 offers added value, since its aim is coherence. It will not allow an individual to look at an issue from a single viewpoint alone. It is quite clear that the way in which a goal is to be reached should not jeopardise other goals. In terms of content, it is important that the inevitable conflicts of some goals, arising through the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the German sustainability strategy, are not circumvented, but are dealt with in open, fair and solution-oriented ways.

In the German sustainability strategy, the strengthening of coherence is presented as a core challenge. Even as the strategy was being adopted, the German government decided that all ministries should appoint departmental coordinators for sustainable development. Their role is not only to be the relevant person to contact with questions concerning sustainable development, but also to be involved in the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the German sustainability strategy, both cross-depart-

mentally and within their respective departments. In addition, they are to promote a greater consideration of the aspects of sustainability within legislative and regulative procedures on the basis of the Common Ministerial Rules of Procedure (Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesregierung; GGO). On these grounds, the justification of any proposal of a parliamentary bill or regulation lies in being able to explain “whether the effects of the proposition corresponds with sustainable development; in particular with regard to the long-term effects of the undertaking” (GGO, § 44, Abs. 1).

Whether or not this sustainability impact assessment will make an adequate contribution to ensure the sustainability of policies, as well as to address potential goal conflicts, should be investigated using scientific means and discussed, with the involvement of civil society, in the relevant fora for participation.

A lack of policy coherence is not, chiefly, a consequence of inadequate communication and deficient co-ordination; rather it is caused by diverging political interests within society. These conflicts of interest need to be made transparent, discussed openly and brought to a solution. Across party lines, even high-ranking politicians admit that there are policy areas in Germany which are still a long way from achieving sustainability, including transport, agricultural, energy and trade policies. In these areas, there are still important challenges for the German government, in particular for policy areas which contribute to social inequality and the destruction of the environment, both in Germany and across the globe.

The particular focus on those who are most vulnerable, those who should not be “left behind”, is important and yet, at the same time, we cannot live and operate at the expense of future generations. Respecting and complying with planetary boundaries (once more), is also considered to be a matter of priority by the German sustainability strategy (an “absolute boundary”) – and introduced as a principle in its introductory chapter. If it is to take seriously the principles which are presented ahead of the sustainability strategy, it is not an option for the German government to promote or tolerate a form of economic management which either disadvantages people in other countries or future generations:

“The Federal Government of Germany means to follow the guiding principle of sustainable development and adjust its policies, in order to work towards satisfying the needs of today’s and future generations to the same degree – in Germany as well as in every other part of the world – and to enable both to live a life full of dignity. For this, a development that is economically efficient, socially balanced and ecologically sound is required, whereby the planetary boundaries

of our earth, together with an orientation towards a life which advocates dignity for all (a life free from poverty and hunger, a life in which all people are able to develop their potential, in dignity and equality; cf. core message of Agenda 2030) determine the absolute external limits.”¹⁸

These principles are to remain in place, as the various dimensions of sustainability are addressed and compromises sought where there are conflicting goals. With regards to many, though not all challenges, the question arises as to how, within a reasonable amount of time, an ecologically and ethically acceptable measure can be reached (considering the effects of the decisions taken upon other nations), without putting those who are closer to home under pressure from unilateral burdens and the ensuing social repercussions. It will not always be possible to avoid economic losses; therefore, they must be balanced by an equitable distribution of the burdens, as well as social and industrial policies that are forward-looking. Nevertheless, since its implementation ultimately serves the future economic viability of the country, on balance, it can be seen that the Agenda 2030 contains more opportunities than risks.

4.1.3 Structuring Forms of Participation

The German government has announced that it intends to expand existing participatory formats, as well as to create new structures. The office of the chancellor has already conducted a conference entitled “Sustainability Forum“ in June 2017. In the future, representatives of all groups or spheres that are relevant to society are due to meet once a year,¹⁹ thereby creating an opportunity to comment upon the plans of the German government and to present and discuss their own contributions regarding the implementation of the sustainability strategy and the Agenda 2030.

In addition, within the framework of the new forum, a small dialogue group is to prepare and evaluate the meetings of the State Secretary Committee for Sustainable Development within the chancellery. A steering committee for the new Science Platform “Sustainability 2030” has also been established recently.

¹⁸ The German Sustainability Strategy: Deutsche Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie (new edition 2016), p. 24; https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/Infomaterial/BPA/Bestellservice/Deutsche_Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie_Neuaufgabe_2016.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=19.

¹⁹ These include: The German federal states and local authorities; trade associations and enterprises; trade unions; associations promoting the interests of the socially disadvantaged; associations and organisations supporting causes relating to development, the environment, peace and human rights; churches and religious communities; academic institutes and platforms, the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development and the Council for Sustainable Development, as well as additional associations and groups which address topics related to Agenda 2030 and/or the German Sustainability Strategy.

In all these participatory formats and multi-agency platforms, the diverse roles and responsibilities of the various players need to be taken into account. The Agenda 2030 is an agreement made by the governments of the member states of the United Nations. They – the governments – are responsible and accountable for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and should (or rather must, depending upon their respective constitution) involve the parliament. The Council for Sustainable Development (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung; RNE), which was established by the German government, also plays an important role; and it is through the RNE that numerous stakeholder-processes are put into motion and realised in an exemplary fashion.²⁰

An ambitious and successful implementation of the Agenda 2030 will also depend upon the constructive and critical co-operation of non-state protagonists, including the churches. Any non-state players, however, should not attempt to represent the state, nor be urged to accept responsibilities outside of their control that are fundamentally the responsibilities of the state. Neither can non-state players lay claim to the right to be involved in the government's and/or parliament's decision-making processes which include the right to vote. Non-state players however, could and should offer their own contributions towards the implementation of the Agenda 2030 within their own spheres of influence, and use their expertise and questions, in critical and constructive ways, to collaborate in decision-making processes, in an advisory capacity.

4.2 Expectations of the Churches

This plea for a transformation towards sustainability by the *Advisory Commission of the EKD on Sustainable Development* is not solely directed at Christians within our nation. In order to help effect a transformation which is fit for the future and which involves the whole of our society, the churches mean to act as an admonisher, a mediator and a driver. We are still looking, together with many others, for the right and feasible answers to numerous decisive issues which affect the future: What are the hallmarks of a good life? Which kind of wealth do we wish to promote? In which areas is sufficiency, rather than growth, the more future-oriented goal? Which kind of growth is important to maintain? How can we measure successful development in better ways?

²⁰ Cf. <https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/>

4.2.1 The Church as an Admonisher

The Agenda 2030 refers to many issues which the churches have been addressing since the 1980 s within the framework of the worldwide “Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation”. In addition, the churches’ contributions can be seen in many of the statements made at an international level by the World Council of Churches and have been, time and time again, confirmed in numerous statements and decisions taken by the EKD and the German Bishops’ Conference: As humankind, we need to design our co-existence and economic management in such a way that God’s creation is preserved in its beauty and entirety, and that all people are able to live in security and dignity, including future generations.

For this to happen, a comprehensive transformation process within politics and society is required. We need a radical change concerning our attitude towards our fellow creatures, one which is informed by humility and mindfulness. We need more passion and determination to implement a solidary lifestyle which undertakes to ensure the rights of all people and which particularly champions the rights of the poor. We need an “ethics of sufficiency”, which imposes limits upon the boundlessness and immoderateness of people. In order for this to be accomplished, the churches need to act as admonishers, even more clearly and audibly than before.²¹

As they advocate a social and ecological transformation, not only do Christians acknowledge themselves to be connected with all those who support the implementation of the Agenda 2030, they are already working alongside such advocates in diverse ways.

The key factor for such a co-operation is the Church’s ability to base itself upon not only its articles of faith and creeds, as expressed in its statements and appeals to the political arena, but also upon the guiding principles which inform both the Agenda 2030 and, at a national level, the German sustainability strategy, as adopted by the Federal Government of Germany.

4.2.2 The Church as a Mediator

Wherever there are conflicts of goals and interests, the Church should intervene and not only call for an ambitious and coherent implementation of the Agenda 2030, but also adopt the role of a mediator. As such, she should advocate the guiding principles

21 Cf. Michael Biehl, Bernd Kappes, Bärbel Wartenberg-Potter (2017): Grüne Reformation. Ökologische Theologie. Hamburg.

of sustainable development that are based upon human rights, and thus help people in coming together to speak about their hopes, expectations and fears connected with the transformation processes. In this, it is imperative that the Church should collaboratively look for responses of solidarity and courses of action through which no-one is thoughtlessly left behind. At this point, the Church has a special responsibility to focus upon those who are the weakest and most vulnerable within an international, national and local context.

Whenever the Church brings people together to mediate where there is a conflict of goals and advocating for the implementation of Agenda 2030, it must not fall into the trap of being an impartial mediator; rather, championing Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation is part of its proclamation commission. The Church is challenged to object whenever particular interests threaten to assert themselves over and against the common good, or where a search for a solution which corresponds with the guiding principles of sustainable development, is being impinged. Frequently, some of the most diverse interest groups have or create the impression that they are already acting responsibly and sustainably, and in these instances a space is required where people can speak about professed and/or actual facts in a way that is open, fearless, fair, and which fosters clarity.

Wherever the Church is in a position to mediate and offer such a space, it should treat all participants respectfully, fairly and with appreciation. It should also require all other participants to adopt a similar attitude, whilst, at the same time, not renouncing own views and insights. In some circumstances, this might mean that an external, impartial form of moderation or mediation is required; in particular in those cases where the Church itself becomes party to the conflict through its own action or inaction, as demonstrated by some of the examples in the following paragraphs.

4.2.3 The Church as a Driver

This discussion paper means to encourage the Church, at all levels, to instigate a new creativity for sustainability and to embark upon a journey towards a new way of life. Transformation does not necessitate grief and gloom, but rather, it entails the joy of discovery and gratitude. We recognize a growing willingness in people to exchange examples of good practice concerning successful steps towards a sustainable lifestyle; and a lifestyle can only be universalised if it is sustainable. In the coming years, we intend to regularly ask and allow others to ask us: How can we live in harmony with creation? Which good ideas have already been realised? What can we learn from others?

By way of this discussion paper, we wish to initiate a process which reports inspiring transformations and which makes visible the confident and thankful attitude that motivates us. With regard to climate protection, the regional churches have already, by way of a synodal decision, set themselves ambitious reduction goals, which are to be achieved with the help of climate protection concepts. The majority of the 20 regional churches have adopted such a climate protection model. The interim results are encouraging, indicating that nearly all the first goals which were set for 2015, were achieved.²² Concerning the areas of sustainable transport mobility and eco-fair procurement, the EKD Synod of 2017 also decided to ask the member churches and institutions to develop and implement corresponding ideas.²³ In addition, within the field of ethical and sustainable financial investments, the Protestant regional churches, the Protestant banks, the pension funds and the EKD are proving to be pioneers. Together, they have developed a much-noted “Guideline for ethically Sustainable Financial Investments in the German Protestant Church”, which contains information about goals and instruments, as well as concrete examples of their implementation. Alongside exclusion criteria and their utilisation (divestment), the manual discusses positive criteria, direct investments and several other topics, as well as the Engagement Approach.²⁴ This position paper explicitly encourages the regional churches, agencies and other church institutions to instigate similar processes, as regards the other goals of the Agenda 2030. In this, the following guiding motives apply: identifying one’s own opportunities for action (and relevant responsibilities) regarding the 17 target areas, describing one’s own quantified goals along with time limits and, wherever possible, the defining measures for their implementation, as well as reporting on them regularly. Commissioning suitable research institutions such as FEST, who have previously worked on local implementation plans, can support such a process. By implementing measures of this kind, the churches can truly become drivers of a sustainable development and lend credence and weight to their words of admonition.

Above and beyond this, through their diverse, spatially-inclusive and almost comprehensive educational work within day nurseries, schools, confirmation classes and adult education, the churches have an exceptional opportunity to contribute to a change of values and attitudes within society. Educational projects which support sustainable

²² Cf. Chapter 5.3. below.

²³ Cf. https://www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds_doc/s17_11_Beschluss_Engagement_Klimagerechtigkeit.pdf.

²⁴ For 10 years, financial managers in churches, diaconal ministries, church treasuries and banks have been collaborating in the Working Group of Church Investors (Arbeitskreis Kirchlicher Investoren), discussing recent developments with regard to investments which are compatible with the requirements of social, ecological and intergenerational standards, and conducting engagement dialogues on these issues.

Cf. www.aki-ekd.de, www.aki-ekd.de and <https://www.aki-ekd.de/en/guideline-for-ethically-sustainable-investment/guideline/>

development are particularly suitable in this respect.²⁵ In terms of such a transformation process within society, fresh spiritual ideas, which have already been drafted, for instance, to support worship services, fasting campaigns or pilgrimages,²⁶ prove to be of great value, since they not only contribute to the development of new narratives, but they also have the potential to become sources of strength for the necessary transformation. Some congregations, as well as church initiatives, are already testing out new ways of becoming “agents of change”.²⁷ As yet, they are clearly in a minority, but if more were to follow this example, a movement with transformative power could ensue.

In this vein, we are building upon the demands that were made in the study on development authored by the *Advisory Commission of the EKD on Sustainable Development* in 2015: “... that they may have life, and have it abundantly”.²⁸ Here, the expectation was expressed that the Agenda 2030 “Transforming Our World” could lead towards the one great social and ecological transformation which would implement a global development based upon human rights and environmentally-friendly principles.

Most of the goals of sustainable development need to be achieved “locally”, that is in communities and municipalities, both amongst us and in the ecumenical world. Technical know-how and self-interest, when properly understood, are necessary, but not sufficient. The ecological footprint that we leave as we go about our daily lives is simply not sustainable. We are convinced that, in the coming years, our attitudes and values will be of decisive importance. Therefore, we are delighted to be able to give an account of encouraging new beginnings. In the following pages, the question as to how Christians in Germany are already contributing to the transformation towards sustainable development, through their attitudes, prayers and actions, as well as how they can continue to do so in an optimistic and ecumenical manner, will be addressed.

The journey is a long one and time is running out. Grateful for the Creator’s love for his world, we are, time and time again, amazed as we face the challenges with confidence, while thanking and praising him: “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning.”

25 Cf. i. a. <https://www.nachhaltigkeit.nrw.de/akteure/institutionen-netzwerke-fuer-mehr-nachhaltigkeit/institut-fuer-kirche-und-gesellschaft-der-evangelischen-kirche-von-westfalen/>.

26 Cf. www.nachhaltig-predigen.de; www.klimafasten.de, www.klimapilgern.de.

27 www.umkehr-zum-leben.de; www.anders-wachsen.de; <http://www.micha-initiative.de/>.

28 “... that they may have life, and have it abundantly” – A Contribution to the Debate about new Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development – A Study by the Advisory Commission of the EKD on Sustainable Development https://www.ekd.de/ekd_en/ds_doc/ekdtext_122_guiding_principles.pdf.

5. What we need to do

In the following paragraphs of this discussion paper, we will examine four topics by way of examples, with reference to several SDGs in each. The topics to be discussed are: “ending hunger, promoting sustainable agriculture”, “ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns”, “reducing inequalities” and “protecting the climate, promoting coal exit and sustainable mobility”.

We have chosen these four topics, because

- according to the statements of the German government, Germany is, in these areas, still a relatively long way from achieving full sustainability or rather, the goals of the Agenda 2030,
- goal conflicts become particularly apparent within the context of these topics and
- in these areas, the Church itself is challenged and can also offer valuable contributions at the level of the regional churches and the congregations.

This however, does not mean that the SDGs and their topics, or other examples of church engagement which are not mentioned in this discussion paper, are any less important, nor does it imply that it is our intention to select some individual goals whilst neglecting others; rather, we are keenly aware of the interdependency of all goals. To address all SDGs and all topics however, would go beyond the constraints of this paper.

The following chapters are structured in such a way that the statements found in Agenda 2030 and those of the German Sustainability Strategy are firstly presented, and then the particular challenges for the churches are described.

5.1 Ending Hunger, Promoting Sustainable Agriculture

5.1.1 ... as it appears in Agenda 2030

SDG 2 of Agenda 2030 is particularly ambitious: The goal is to fully eradicate hunger by 2030. Every person – regardless of where they live – should be able to feed themselves adequately and in a sufficiently healthy manner. In view of the fact that there are more than 800 million people suffering from hunger and 2 billion suffering from malnutrition, as a result of insufficient or unbalanced diets, this is a challenge of immense proportions.

SDG 2 combines the fight against hunger with the promotion of sustainable agriculture, focussing, in particular, on those who, in many countries, receive too little support: smallholder families and fishers. By 2030, productivity and income of “small-scale food producers” is to be doubled and this is to be done in such a way that will not put more pressure on the ecosystems (climate, water, land, biodiversity).

Therefore, the strategy in the fight against hunger should not increase production irrespective of ecological consequences. All the environmental goals of Agenda 2030 need to be taken into account, including SDG 10, which aims to reduce inequality in all societies and also between nation states. An agricultural strategy which operates along the lines of “grow or go away” and which would lead to even larger enterprises, forcing many smallholder farms to quit, can hardly be reconciled with SDG 10 – particularly in nations where there are no alternative jobs for people who once worked in the agricultural sector.

Through the interconnection between the goals and targets of the Agenda 2030, the strategy to achieve SDG 2 will also need to take into account the following topics: gender equality, health (e.g. resistance to antibiotics), the structure and strengthening of social security systems, the correction “of trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets” (a direct quote from Agenda 2030) and the „limitation of extreme food price volatility”, which is a consequence of excessive speculation in food price commodities. The Agenda 2030 also calls for the maintenance of the “genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species”, in addition to “access to genetic resources and related benefit sharing and traditional knowledge”. In a time of an increasing concentration of power in the seed sector (inter alia through Bayer taking over Monsanto) and the granting of patents on plants and animals, these statements are highly topical.

5.1.2 ... as discussed in the German Sustainability Strategy

In the chapter discussing SDG 2, the German government lists many measures, the aims of which are to help achieve SDG 2. The interconnection with the other goals of Agenda 2030 however, and the discussion surrounding any ensuing goal conflicts, are not fully comprehensive.

In the German Sustainability Strategy, the chapter which discusses SDG 2 defines two indicators, both of which are targeted at the situation in Germany: The target for the nitrogen surplus of the gross nitrogen balance for Germany is to be limited to 70 kilo-

grams per hectare on agricultural land by 2030 (or rather, it is to be reflected in the annual average between 2028 and 2032). In addition, the proportion of ecological farming, in relation to the area used for agriculture, is to be increased to 20 percent in the ensuing years. A precise time scale for this however, has not been specified.

Germany is still a long way from achieving both goals. In recent years, the proportion of ecological farming, in relation to the area used for agriculture, has been stagnating and is currently at a mere 7.5 percent. It is obviously still a long way to the target of 20 percent. However, the situation will only change if an ambitious time scale is set, if the background conditions are improved and if subsidies for farmers who desire to switch to ecological farming, are substantially increased.

Currently, the sustainability strategy lacks a defined indicator; one which is directly aimed at an international level and which measures the German engagement in the fight against hunger and the implementation of the right to food. Such an indicator however, is to be considered and integrated as soon as possible.

If SDG 2 is taken seriously and interconnected with all the other goals of the Agenda 2030, goal conflicts will inevitably arise, for which the German government will need to prepare. The agricultural model prevalent in Germany (and also internationally) is not only unsustainable; it massively contributes to climate change, has a negative impact on soil and water and leads to further loss of biodiversity. Striking proof of this is to be found in the results of the studies undertaken by the Federal Environment Agency.

5.1.3 ... as a Challenge for the Churches

SDG 2 propagates healthy and sufficient nutrition for all, as well as promoting sustainable agriculture. The most urgent issue is the eradication of hunger. In order to achieve this, the Protestant Development Agency „Bread for the World“, Diakonia Disaster Relief (“Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe“) and several mission agencies are making valuable contributions. Humanitarian aid is given to people who find themselves in disaster and war zones, as well as in refugee camps. Within the framework of long-term development co-operation, communities are supported, following the principle of ‘help for self-help’, to fight for their right to access food and to provide their “daily bread” through their own efforts. Through development and mission agencies, as well as directly in dialogue with those in positions of power within politics and the economy, the Church advocates the discussion, and the overcoming, of the structural causes of hunger and extreme poverty.

Almost all congregations support Bread for the World, Diakonia Disaster Relief and other mission agencies through their collections, their offerings and their actions. Many congregations and church districts, deaneries and provosties are engaged in North-South-partnerships, which also address issues of justice and solidarity.

That our mode of production and consumption is exacerbating hunger in the developing nations, was explained by the *EKD Advisory Commission on Sustainable Development* in the study published in 2015: “Give us this Day our Daily Bread”.²⁹ In this, one of the recommendations, amongst others, was that such connections, as well as questions concerning lifestyle, should be addressed in the congregations – for example, in confirmation classes and within the context of adult education. The EKD Commission also suggested that the regional churches and congregations should be mindful of healthy and ethical nutrition within their centres for day nurseries, as well as dealing with their properties responsibly, ensuring that where areas are being leased for agricultural use, sustainable agricultural practices should be employed.

During its meeting in Düsseldorf in November 2013, the EKD Synod adopted the declaration “Es ist genug für alle da” – Welternährung und nachhaltige Landwirtschaft (There is enough for everyone – global food security and sustainable agriculture), in which it calls for church congregations to be guided by “ethical guidelines for a sustainable agriculture” when following awarding procedures which grant the leasing of land. This was explained by the joint study entitled “Neuorientierung für eine nachhaltige Landwirtschaft” (new orientation for a sustainable agriculture), which was approved by the Protestant Church in Germany and the German Bishops’ Conference in 2003. Furthermore, the declaration of the Synod claims that:

“Alongside an ecologically responsible management in accordance with the regulations, the regionality of the leaseholders and the empowerment of rural areas should also be important criteria for consideration. Cultivation by local farmers should be given preference over and above supraregional corporations. Ecological and conventional enterprises with sustainable production should be given preference.”³⁰

29 Cf. EKD-Text 121: Give us this Day our Daily Bread – Setting a new Direction for Agricultural Development and Global Food Security. A Study by the Advisory Commission of the EKD on Sustainable Development. https://www.ekd.de/ekd_en/ds_doc/ekdtext_121_agricultural_development_and_global_food_security.pdf.

30 Cf. There is enough for everyone. Global Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture; 2013, archiv.ekd.de/5020.html, German: Kundgebung der EKD-Synode 2013: Es ist genug für alle da. Welternährung und nachhaltige Landwirtschaft; https://www.ekd.de/synode2013/s13_beschluss_kundgebung.html.

At the 2013 Synod, this last sentence caused a controversy; so much so that the original draft version, in which the working group had merely specified a preference for ecological enterprises, was amended to include “ecological and conventional enterprises with sustainable production...”. The reaction to these apparent subtleties points to the considerable conflicts at the centre of the entire agricultural discussion, as well as to the conflicts surrounding the leasing of church land.

In “Ethische Leitlinien für eine nachhaltige Landwirtschaft”³¹ (ethical guidelines for a sustainable agriculture), to which the resolution of the EKD Synod of 2013 refers, its authors lament, on the one hand, that too few a number of church institutions and congregations are actively engaged in ecological farming in practice, and yet, on the other hand, they appreciate that several regional churches have already issued recommendations for the environmentally-friendly cultivation of church land. Above and beyond this, there are now also recommendations for the maintenance of church property and land such as cemeteries, gardens etc.³²

Outside of professional circles, there is much confusion surrounding the terms of sustainable agriculture, environmentally-friendly cultivation, consideration of agro-ecological aspects and ecological farming. That which was doubtlessly meant in the EKD Synod resolution of 2013, and which would be a sensible option (but was not expressed concisely), is the following: The Church is to give preference, in the leasing of its land, to ecologically operating enterprises, which have already been certified or are currently in the transition period – and/or to conventional enterprises which go beyond statutory provisions to provide special services with regard to environmental protection and animal welfare.

The two largest denominations, alongside their congregations, are amongst the biggest landowners in Germany. An exact number cannot be given, as the information detailing the properties of the Catholic Church is not freely available. On its homepage, the EKD estimates that, of its own properties, about 15,000 Protestant congregations own more than approximately 325,000 hectares of land. About 80 percent of this is used for agriculture. Therefore, about 260,000 hectares are leased to farmers. The annual profits from this land, for the church communities, is estimated to be about 110 million Euros.

31 Cf. Neuorientierung für eine nachhaltige Landwirtschaft. Ein Diskussionsbeitrag zur Lage der Landwirtschaft mit einem Wort des Vorsitzenden der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz und des Vorsitzenden des Rates der EKD, Gemeinsame Texte 18, Hannover/Bonn 2003, S. 28–37; https://www.ekd.de/neuorientierung_landwirtschaft2.html.

32 Cf. Empfehlungen in der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Landeskirche Hannovers, Biodiversität auf kirchlichen Friedhöfen, unter: <http://www.kirchliche-dienste.de/arbeitsfelder/umweltschutz/Naturschutz-auf-Friedhof>.

In 1990, the building and property commission (Baurechts- und Grundstückskommission) of the EKD issued recommendations for model lease contracts and these were further developed at a later date.³³ Some – but not all – of the regional churches have adopted these model lease contracts and have also devised their own guidelines or recommendations for the awarding procedures relating to leased land. With regard to the agricultural structure, as well as to the relative importance of the lease income, there is a great disparity between the different member churches.³⁴ A comparison of these model lease contracts, guidelines and recommendations reveals commonalities, but also great differences.

With few exceptions, all the regional churches now strictly ban the sowing or planting of genetically modified plants and the spreading of sewage sludge on church land; justifying this with reference to the unforeseeable risks of green genetic engineering and the toxic residue in sewage sludge, which impacts the soil quality.

Most regional churches have issued recommendations for the cultivation of the land which go beyond the above mentioned guidelines, and these can be included into the lease contracts by the church communities. These recommendations affect ecological and social aspects that are relevant to the local environment. Criteria which also take the international dimension into account are, however, rarely to be found, but should be integrated in the spirit of the Agenda 2030. The application of the ‘do no harm’ principle to agriculture in Germany would mean that any negative impact upon people and nature in other countries is also to be avoided. The massive use of concentrated feed, which is largely imported from developing nations in which adequate food supply for the population is not ensured, raises ethical questions which need to be addressed and taken into account in the guidelines or recommendations for the leasing of church land.

Contrary to the situation in almost all other regional churches, the public authorities that are superordinate to the Protestant Church in Central Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Mitteldeutschland, EKM) have taken hold of the opportunity to lease church

³³ The EKD’s model contract for the lease of land, inclusive of the respective suggestions and recommendations, was last reviewed in 2016. The position paper published by the EKD’s property commission regarding the use and awarding procedures of church land: “Kirchliche Strategien und Rahmenbedingungen für eine nachhaltige Bodenpolitik und Landnutzung”, which was sent to the member churches of the EKF in April 2017, also needs to be mentioned.

³⁴ While in some regional churches, the income generated by the lease of church land is of subordinate relevance to the financing of the churches’ ministry, in other churches, this income will cover up to 25 percent of the ministers’ stipend: This may lead to divergence and conflict in the evaluation of ecological and economic goals.

land. This also affects the awarding procedures which are conducted in the EKM according to a points system. In this, economic factors (the price of the lease), ecological matters (ensuring a form of cultivation which is environmentally-friendly beyond the legally-required minimum) and social aspects (creating places of employment and training, employing those with special needs / alleviating social hardship) are to be considered, as is the regional background and church membership of the applicant or manager.

Whilst the application of the points system is obligatory in the EKM, in the new manual issued by the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN), it is merely recommended for guidance. Several other regional churches have deliberately decided against a points system, since, in their opinion, it limits the administrative discretion of the congregations, which, in most cases, make such decisions about the leasing of land.

Nearly all regional churches recommend giving preference to the previous leaseholder over and above a potential new leaseholder, in line with the principle of loyalty applied to a lease contract. They recommend giving preference to: church members over and above applicants who are not church members; the family farming enterprises of members of the congregation; or at least those who are indigenous to the region, over and above large-scale investors; and individual farmers over and above agricultural service supply agencies. Those who pay more to the workers, who do more for the environment and who demonstrate their social commitment, should have a better chance of being awarded the contract. Social hardships should be avoided, which may occur for example, should a previous leaseholder be refused the renewal of their lease contract, thereby losing agricultural land, and facing the risk of economic deprivation.

In the case of a dilemma, the fact that there is a large number of very diverse criteria leave the church communities facing very difficult questions as to which of the criteria is to be the decisive factor. Therefore, many church communities do not take advantage of their negotiating position and ask the church district office, or a person of trust, to present a 'reasonable' suggestion, which is then merely 'rubber-stamped'. Long-term lease contracts are frequently renewed unchecked.

Church communities which take ecological and social aspects into account when considering the lease of their land often face trouble. The involvement of the previous leaseholder at an early stage however, as well as dialogue on equal terms can serve to avoid profound conflicts, achieving success through consensus. A positive example from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern can be found in the following paragraphs:

Success by way of involving the previous leaseholder at an early stage: An example from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

The Evangelical church community of Kieve-Wredenhagen, within the rural district Mecklenburgische Seenplatte, comprises of 390 congregational members in six church towns and leases 181 hectares of land for agricultural production, ten hectares of forest and a hectare of land for gardening. The agricultural land is cultivated by six professional full-time farmers and four part-time farmers. The income generated by the lease amounts to about 26,000 Euros per year, of which 20 percent is given to the funds of the congregational council and to the building funds. 60 percent is given to the church district and used for staffing costs.

For years, the eleven-strong Congregational Council did not attend to the leasing of their land, but left the preparation of lease contracts to the church district office. Their draft proposals were always accepted by the Congregational Council without debate. It was only at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection of the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Landesministerium für Landwirtschaft, Umwelt und Verbraucherschutz) to make one and a half hectares of church land available for a biotope, an area to be designated for renaturalisation and rewetting, that the Congregational Council was prompted to intensively consider its own natural resource, which was the church land. The area was released from the lease contract and left to the foundation ‘Stiftung Umwelt- und Naturschutz Mecklenburg-Vorpommern’ (foundation for environmental protection and nature conservation in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). The Congregational Council formed a working group to discuss “lease contracts”, intently concerning itself with the situation as it related to agriculture, rural development and developments in environmental protection and nature conservation in the region, and undertook to consider the question as to what would be a responsible way of treating the church land. This entailed visiting many farms and inviting the response of external experts of various disciplines. In a dialogue, in which the previous leaseholders were also involved, five new points were incorporated into the lease contracts:

1. The leaseholder is obligated, at the beginning of their lease contract, after six years and a year before either the end or the renewal of the lease contract (for a lease term of twelve years), to have a soil analysis undertaken by an accredited specialist laboratory, which will determine the nutrient levels and humus content of the soil. The examination should demonstrate that an improvement of the humus content has been achieved by the end of the term.
2. The leaseholders are to commit themselves to employ crop rotation involving a sequence of five crops and a minimum of one leguminous plant.
3. The leaseholder foregoes the use of broadband or total herbicide such as glyphosate.
4. By way of protection against soil erosion when growing maize, it has now been stipulated that a nurse crop or a subsequent intermediate winter crop is to be cultivated.
5. The first mowing of green areas must be scheduled after the 20th May.

The Congregational Council agreed to the possibility of waiving a part of the lease income, should individual leaseholders fear, or provide evidence of, a loss of earnings during the transition period as a result of the new requirements. As yet, this offer has not been taken up. In the case of seven out of the ten previous leaseholders – one organic farm and six conventional farming enterprises – new lease contracts have been drawn up for the next twelve years.

Source: Regine Hapke-Solf, Christine Jantzen, Reinhard Sander und Jean-Dominique Lagies (2017): Was leitet unsere Kirchengemeinde? Bericht der AG „Pachtverträge“ der Kirchengemeinde Kieve-Wredenhagen, Loccumer Protokoll 52/16, Rehburg-Loccum.

In general, congregations should firstly discuss new criteria for the lease of their land with the previous leaseholders, explain their motives for any changes, seriously take into account any potential concerns and objections and consider making allowances for a transition period, offering potential financial concessions by way of compromise, and all the while, viewing the transition as a process. It is better for family farms who use conventional agricultural means, and who have a connection to the congregation, to willingly take (small) steps towards greater sustainability, in the direction of the Agenda 2030, whilst not suffering adverse economic consequences, rather than enforcing radical change with severity.

At the same time, the German government requests that the churches, with regard to their, on the whole, substantial landholdings, contribute to the goal specified in the Sustainability Strategy: for Germany to increase the proportion of areas that are farmed organically, according to EU guidelines, from today's 7.5 percent to 20 percent by 2030 – and earlier if possible. The churches should make this a greater priority; however, not by simply giving preference to organic farms, but rather, by providing incentives or concessions for conventional family farms to transition to organic farming.

The question posed by policy-makers and interested parties regarding the proportion of cultivated church land that is farmed organically, can neither be answered by the EKD nor the regional churches, since these figures have not been collected. This should not remain the case.

The small and medium-sized family farms are under immense economic pressure. Many are fighting for their survival and see their only chance as being a cost-effective increase of their production. Demands from environmentalists, conservationists and church representatives to introduce stricter requirements and a greater consideration of sustainability criteria, are often perceived as being an unreasonable demand, or even a threat. Many farmers rightly point out that they are willing to do more for environmental protection and animal welfare, but wish to do so in a way which will “pay off” and which will not force the farm into bankruptcy. In order to solve any structural problems, the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU needs to be re-oriented and the latitude of the Federal Government and the regional governments needs to be used advantageously, so as to promote and reward the agro-ecological performance of the

farmers. For this, the *EKD-Advisory Commission on Sustainable Development* has provided several proposals.³⁵

In the agrarian dialogue, to which the Church should invite the main players, the Church should, time and time again, emphasise the fact that it understands the predicament in which many agricultural enterprises find themselves, and that it does not blame the farmers for undesirable developments. Rather, all participants should, together, seek solutions, advocate better background conditions and actively shape that which is already workable today – for instance, the land leased by the churches.

Irrespective of this, however, the proportion of agriculturally used church land that is managed organically must also be systematically recorded. The fact that neither the EKD nor the regional churches are currently able to respond correctly to such requests from politicians or the interested public is an administrative omission.

5.2 Sustainable Consumption and Production

5.2.1 ... in the Agenda 2030

The SDG 12 “Sustainable Consumption and Production” contains altogether eleven targets. Fundamentally, the prevention and reduction of waste – from foodstuffs to chemicals – as well as other waste which has a longer lifecycle, is at the forefront, including finding ways to produce goods in ways which are environmentally friendly and socially acceptable. Initially, the 10-year framework of programmes to ensure sustainable consumption and production, which was agreed at the Rio+20-Conference (2012) and developed further at a later date, has been affirmed; and all nations have now been asked to develop national action plans and corresponding policies by 2030. This target has been further specified through additional targets such as achieving the “sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources by 2013”, the sound management of chemicals by 2020 and a substantial reduction of waste generation through “prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse” by 2030.

³⁵ Cf. e. g.: Leitlinien für eine multifunktionale und nachhaltige Landwirtschaft. Zur Reform der Gemeinsamen Agrarpolitik (GAP) der Europäischen Union. Eine Stellungnahme der Kammer der EKD für nachhaltige Entwicklung, EKD-Texte 114, Hannover 2011; <https://www.ekd.de/6-Empfehlungen-der-Kammer-fur-nachhaltige-Entwicklung-fur-den-weiteren-Reformprozess-der-Europaischen-Agrarpolitik-850.htm>.

The goal to ensure sustainable ways of consumption and production is closely connected with many other SDGs (for instance, the use of water and energy, the protection of the climate and soil, biodiversity etc.). Essentially, it is at the heart of the notion of sustainability that the current consumption, as well as the manufacture of products, should not affect the lives of future generations. Therefore, the planetary boundaries must remain the central conceptual frame of reference. Consequently, SDG 12 represents a particular challenge to the industrial nations to develop universalisable, sufficient lifestyles. In the following paragraphs, we focus on target SDG 12.7 “public procurement” and 12.8 “information and awareness”.

5.2.2 ... in the German Sustainability Strategy

The German Sustainability Strategy emphasises the global responsibility of the industrial nations, whose ways of production and consumption clearly affect the living conditions in developing nations in a significant manner. The German Sustainability Strategy primarily addresses the consumer. The market share of products with an eco-label awarded by the state is to increase from six percent in the first year (2014) to 34 percent by 2030. On its own however, this will not achieve comprehensive, strong sustainability with regard to patterns of consumption and production – especially, if “new bureaucratic costs” are also to be avoided. At present, the indicator is only used with certain product groups; an extension, as well as the use of social labels, is to be reviewed “when suitable labels in the relevant field are available”. In the view of the *EKD Advisory Commission on Sustainable Development*, it would be desirable if, in the future, products with the well-established Fairtrade label, which is supported by the churches, were also included.

The German government intends to set a good example, advocating sustainable public procurement. In terms of the public awarding of contracts, the alterations in legislation – on account of three new EU guidelines concerning public procurement – have already led to some changes. The awarding procedures are not only guided by the principle of cost-effectiveness alone, but, concomitant with the specifications for tenders, may also take sustainability criteria into account, thereby making them a requirement for the awarding of a contract. In this however, the mode of implementation of the legislation is important, as recently demonstrated in the “Entfesselungspaket” (unfettering = deregulation package), an example specific to the federal state

of North-Rhine Westphalia.³⁶ Even by 2015, the German government had adopted the “Maßnahmenprogramm Nachhaltigkeit” (sustainability action plan), which contained goals for sustainable procurement. In addition, the “Nationale Aktionsplan Wirtschaft und Menschenrechte” (National Action Plan on Economics and Human Rights), which was adopted in 2016, points to the concept of human rights due diligence as it applies to public procurement, the announcement of multifaceted measures and a healthy degree of probing to specify mandatory minimum requirements as they relate to public procurement law. The purchasing volume of the public sector amounts to an estimated 260 to 400 billion Euros per year. The German government now plans to review the introduction of a further indicator for the sustainability strategy, which will help log sustainable procurement in the public authorities and institutions of the federal administration.

The second indicator of the German Sustainability Strategy pertaining to SDG 12 registers the energy use and CO₂ emissions of private households. The aim is for there to be a continual reduction, not only of direct CO₂ emissions (e.g. through heating), but also of consumer products, the production and distribution of which is included in the calculations. The third indicator aims to increase the proportion of sustainable production, measuring the number of organisational sites registered in Germany for the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme, EMAS. EMAS is to reveal a voluntary environmental commitment which goes beyond statutory requirements on the part of businesses and institutions. In this instance, one also wonders why the German government does not provide more directive guidance through statutory provisions.

With regard to SDG 12, the German Sustainability Strategy, on the whole, relies almost exclusively upon education and information. The sustainability strategy also refers to the “National Programme for Sustainable Consumption” of 2016. According to this, the purpose of education and information is to create an awareness of the issues amongst all people, in particular the consumers. A study of environmental awareness documents every two years will ascertain attitudes and conduct with regard to sustainable consumption. This approach is in line with the Agenda 2030, which contains, in target 12.8, the following wording: “By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant informa-

³⁶ It was in April 2017 that the updated Collective Bargaining and Public Procurement Act in North-Rhine Westphalia (Tariftreue- und Vergabegesetz; TvgG) came into force. However, the new government of the federal state in NRW counteracted the agreements by introducing the “Entfesselungspaket I”, through which it intends to abolish the regulations designed to enforce the state’s compliance with international employment law and environmental standards for public procurement. (Source: <https://www.femnet-ev.de/index.php/124-pressemitteilungen/769-11-07-2017-produkte-aus-kinderarbeit-wieder-zulaessig>).

tion and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature". It attributes a high degree of importance to the work of education and information with regard to issues of sustainability. This work is to direct consumption towards the choice of sustainable products and, at the same time, with regard to production, advance the innovation of consumer products which are sustainable in every respect. On the one hand, this is to be appreciated and supported whilst, on the other, sustainable consumption also needs to be approached from the side of the production process. More so than ever before, the German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, initiated by the German government and incorporated also into the German Sustainability Strategy, could compel businesses to discharge their duties, seeking to hold them to obligatory regulations and sanctions.³⁷ In this area, more coherence is required with regard to all economic matters pertaining to sustainability, for which reason the German Sustainability Code was developed by the German Council for Sustainable Development (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung, RNE), as it not only facilitates sector-specific specifications, but also allows for extensive standardisation. Above and beyond this, indicators and measures are to be established in the future which build upon current debates and processes of change in society more clearly than ever before, including the reduction of meat consumption, the concept of a circuit economy, an economically viable model of sharing and a transformed mobility system.

Politics should more purposefully create political framework conditions which facilitate and simplify sustainable consumption, rather than simply shifting responsibility to the consumer.

5.2.3 ... as a Challenge for the Churches

With regard to SDG 12.8, with its focus on educational work and awareness campaigns, the Protestant Church can already point to some successes. Innumerable seminars, sessions and conferences, presentations and discussion groups have been conducted on topics around the issue of sustainability. The notion of an excessive consumption of resources at the expense of future generations, that is already detrimental to people living in the southern hemisphere, has been firmly integrated in the *Eine-Welt-Arbeit* (one world ministry) since the beginning of the 1990s. Within the programmes at youth camps and church conventions, measuring our all too large ecological footprint (or rucksack) in creative forms has long been a regular feature.

³⁷ A positive example of this is the "Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh", which was initiated in the wake of the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh. This is a legally binding agreement with sanctions for non-compliance, rather than a voluntary pact among multi-stakeholders; cf. <http://bangladeshaccord.org>.

In services, devotions and retreats, people are asked to join the “Ethics of Enough”; learning to practise these ethics in an exemplary fashion during campaigns such as “Fasting for the Climate”, pilgrimages and retreats.

Above and beyond this, the domestic programmes provided by Bread for the World and funds offered by the regional churches have made the educational ministry of groups, initiatives and campaigns possible by offering advice and financial support for their activities. Similarly, the topic of ethical and sustainable consumption is addressed in many places in church educational ministry such as nurseries, schools, confirmation classes and adult education. In addition, the churches’ partnership ministry, traditionally an area of work undertaken by the churches to promote opportunities for international encounters and mutual learning, increasingly addresses the topic of sustainable consumption. With regard to the SDG 12.7 for public procurement, from the beginning of the 1990s and in the aftermath of the discussions about the consequences of the UN summit in Rio in 1992, the relevant protagonists at local level have been church communities, third-world groups and one-world groups. They not only ran One-World shops, but, together with other local initiatives, attempted to convince the relevant municipal administrations that the Agenda 21 called for practical consequences.

Meanwhile, Fairtrade Towns that are dependent upon the commitment of uncountable volunteers at a local level have also attempted to raise an awareness amongst Members of Parliament within their constituencies concerning sustainable consumption and common responsibility. The inspiration and ideas that have evolved have been brought into the arena of national political discourse.

A significant player in the field of sustainable procurement is fair trade itself. Gepa, the largest fair trade company in Europe, is an ecumenical church-based enterprise. It evolved from the commitment of dedicated people within the “third-world movement”, as it was called then. The continued development of this dedicated ministry, which is recognisable through the transfair label, is still strongly supported by the ecumenical one-world ministry.

The campaign for sustainable consumption within the Protestant Church thus builds upon the broad range of work undertaken by the one-world and environmental ministries. The following initiatives make important contributions towards positive changes in procurement: The project “Zukunft einkaufen” (shopping the future), the initiative “der Grüne Hahn” (the green cockerel), the project “ökofaire Gemeinde” (eco-fair community), the framework agreements of the economic society of the churches in

Germany (Wirtschaftsgesellschaft der Kirchen in Deutschland mbH; WGKD), and the ecumenical one-world prize.

In terms of applying the principle of sustainable consumption to public procurement, as advocated by the German government however, the active involvement of the Protestant churches has reached its capacity. The transition also requires the development of a planned and structured process that will successfully organise the internal processes of participation and co-ordination. The Protestant Church has good reason to point out publicly that the transition towards sustainable consumption is necessary and therefore, for the sake of credibility, efforts must be intensified.

The Example of Christ Church Hasbergen

The Committee for Development Education and Publications (Ausschuss für entwicklungsbezogene Bildung und Publizistik; ABP) of the Protestant regional churches in Lower Saxony has honoured the Evangelical-Lutheran Christ Church in Hasbergen for addressing global justice and sustainable management in core areas of the church's ministry. It not only secured the involvement of many people, but motivated those involved to contribute greatly to individual projects. At the same time, the church community also made an impact on the political community through co-operating, for instance, with the German Red Cross and the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU). The areas mentioned in the following paragraphs are being continually developed:

Meanwhile, the church hospitality was reorganised to support fairtrade products from organic production. A ladies' group sells fairtrade products at a stand in the congregational community centre which was specifically created for this purpose. The number of products on offer has risen from 12 to 80 different food items. Members of the congregation celebrating anniversaries, guests and volunteers are now presented with fairtrade gifts. At local fleamarkets and car boot sales, congregants sell fairtrade products. In thematic worship services, confirmation classes, the family centre and the day nursery, fairtrade is firmly integrated and many people participate in the annual "fair week". In conjunction with the local secondary school, old mobile phones are collected for recycling.

During the course of a year, a volunteer repaired damaged toys that had been donated and at the Christmas fayre, they were sold cheaply to people in need.

The congregation agreed to demolish the old church hall and built a new, energy-efficient community centre. The community centre and the church are both heated with climate-friendly gas. The control system has been replaced and the doors of the church refurbished to make the building more energy-efficient in terms of heating. The lights in the church have been replaced with dimmable halogen lamps. On the roof of the community centre, a photovoltaic system which belongs to a co-operative in the town, has been installed. The electricity generated is fed into the power grid and, in return, the congregation benefits from a reduced electricity rate. A water purification system provides drinkable water for the needs of the community centre.

Source: DVD entitled "Ev.-Luth. Christuskirche Hasbergen – Faire Gemeinde 2016" (Ev.-Luth. Christ Church Hasbergen – Fair Community 2016).

Meanwhile, the Transfair company has developed fairtrade standards for textiles.³⁸ There are licensees today who, amongst other initiatives, offer bedding and towels for conference centres as well as hospitals and nursing facilities. Here, the Protestant Church could adopt a pioneering role and lead by way of example in individual diaconal institutions and conference centres, demonstrating that a switching to textiles that have been produced under fair conditions is possible.

The examples could inspire other institutions – even institutions that are owned by the state – to follow suit and become active themselves. In such a way, a stimulus would be created for entrepreneurs to offer items that have been produced in a fair and just manner. The Protestant Church would meet the standards expected of an innovative organisation and could contribute to the further development of the German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles instigated by the German government.

5.3 Overcoming Inequalities

5.3.1 ... in the Agenda 2030

SDG 10: To “reduce inequalities within and among countries” is an important goal of Agenda 2030. It is a sign of success that, in the negotiations, it has been possible to integrate a separate goal for reducing inequality. All governments thereby admitted that increasing inequality is a significant problem worldwide. It is true that income disparity has increased in most countries in recent decades; as has the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. In particular in the affluent nations of Europe and North America, social inequality has clearly increased, with the result that, in these parts of the world, poverty affects large parts of the population.³⁹

The first four of the ten targets of SDG 10 address the reduction of inequality within countries. The aim is for the income of the lower income groups to grow above average by 2030. This goal is complemented by the target of improved inclusion, guaranteed equal opportunities, progressive taxation and greater equality in the areas of wage policy and social protection. The other targets relate to global inequality with a goal to improve the regulation of global financial markets and for developing nations

³⁸ In addition to Fairtrade-certified cotton, the Fairtrade Textile Standard has emerged, which is no longer limited to cotton but supports all processes involved in the value-added chain and advocates a living wage. At present, the first companies are undergoing the auditing procedures; cf. https://www.fairtrade-deutschland.de/fileadmin/DE/01_was_ist_fairtrade/02_fairtrade-siegel/02.2Spezialsiegel/Textilstandard_und_-programm/fairtrade_textile_briefing_extern.pdf.

³⁹ Cf. Branko Milanovic (2013): Global Income Inequality in Numbers: in History and Now, in: Global Policy Nr. 4, Jg. 2, S. 198–208.

to be given a greater say in international economic and financial institutions. Through a planned and well-managed migration policy, orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration is to be facilitated. Finally, official development assistance and financial flows are to be directed to states where the need is greatest. The transaction costs for migrant remittances should, by 2030, be reduced to less than 3 percent.

It is to be appreciated that inequality, in SDG 10, is not solely to be understood in an economic and financial sense. Rather, inequality may entail a lack of social and cultural participation within society, as well as a consolidation of poverty and discrimination for those already affected. It is important to critically ascertain that the goal to achieve and sustain the income growth of the poorest 40 percent of the population, at a rate higher than the national average, by 2030, might not be the most suitable way of substantially reducing income inequality. In addition, as it stands, the reduction of inequality is dependent upon continuous economic growth in the future. Currently, the level of existing inequality, in terms of wealth and income, as well as the responsibility of affluent and higher earners, are not sufficiently addressed. A widening “social gap” between the rich and the poor is harmful to any society and has a negative influence upon almost all indicators of wealth and quality of life, from physical health to life expectation, safety and security, education and social cohesion.

SDG 5 is also relevant to the topic of inequality: to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. The targets address forms of discrimination against women and girls, forms of violence against women and exploitation, as well as harmful practices such as child marriage, forced marriage and genital mutilation. Above and beyond this, the document calls for an appreciation of care and domestic work, a fair balance of responsibilities within the household and the family, access to sexual and reproductive health, as well as equal rights for women in terms of economic resources, access to property and land, and financial services. With regard to equal opportunities, target 5 demands the securing of “women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decisionmaking in political, economic and public life”. Even in Germany, there is still need for action, as demonstrated by the under-representation of women in leadership positions, as well as the disproportionately high risk of poverty on the part of single mothers and the elderly.

5.3.2 ... in the German Sustainability Strategy

With regard to inequality in Germany, the German Sustainability Strategy claims that “up until the middle of the last decade, Germany saw an increase in income inequali-

ty that coincided with growth in the low-wage sector. At the same time, however, the increase in work, the reduction in unemployment and the minimum wage increased opportunities for participation.”⁴⁰ Essentially, social security benefits, social insurance contributions and taxes have significantly contributed to the reduction of inequality as regards disposable income. By way of contrast, there is a greater disparity in the distribution of wealth than there is in terms of income distribution. The activities that are planned, or have already been implemented by the Federal Government in Germany, to achieve SDG 10, relate to the introduction of a statutory minimum wage, a legislative proposal that aims to prevent abusive employment through the use of contracts for specific work and to further develop labour leasing. However, the present figure for the minimum wage is too low to achieve a sustainable reduction of poverty in the lower income bracket. As was the case previously in Germany, relative poverty is rising in Germany whilst unemployment is decreasing. A form of education – one that is designed to be inclusive – should become the norm, and the education system should offer improved equal opportunities. The Federal Government hardly specifies any fiscal, wage and social protection measures which could contribute to the achievement of greater social equality in their own country through redistributive fiscal and transfer policies. In addition, a goal that has been emphasised within educational policy, time and time again, and which aims to separate academic achievement and socio-economic background, is not sufficiently underpinned by effective measures. There is also a lack of specific measures to remedy previous mismanagement and to fairly distribute family burdens. Likewise, the support of single parents and families with many children is still insufficient.

With regard to the international dimension, the Federal Government aims to contribute to the reduction of global inequality through an active trade policy and the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, as well as to support the World Bank, i.a. through lobbying (e.g. with regard to human rights) to improve its standards. At the same time, there are still numerous standards in the EU’s trade policy which contrast starkly to the interests of many developing nations; and the Federal Government should commit itself, with greater determination, to bring about the reduction of these contrasts. In addition, the sustainability strategy should make reference to the National Action Plan on Economics and Human Rights and aim for comprehensive coherence between foreign trade policy and human rights.

⁴⁰ Germany’s National Sustainable Development Strategy (New Edition 2016), p. 145; https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/StatischeSeiten/Schwerpunkte/Nachhaltigkeit/2016-07-27-die-nationale-nachhaltigkeitsstrategie_en.html?nn=393722

Above and beyond this, the Federal Government intends to help partner governments limit income and wealth inequality through progressive fiscal policy. It considers the strengthening of state institutions and civil society to be important factors in the fight against poverty and social inclusion. The Federal Government also intends to commit itself to orderly, safe and responsible migration and yet, suitable measures are barely mentioned. In order to achieve this, the European Union and its member states need to develop procedures which enable refugees to apply for asylum safely, within the framework of ordinary proceedings. On account of the demographic developments, as well as development policy, a migration policy which facilitates access to the employment market would be desirable.

As a focal point of its *equal opportunities policy*, the German Sustainability Strategy emphasises women's equitable access to, and participation in, the employment market, in addition to the compatibility of family and career for women as well as men, so as to achieve an equitable division of family responsibilities through true partnership.⁴¹ In order to assess social equality in line with the first indicator, the difference between the average gross hourly wages of women and men is measured as an initial assessment. In 2015, women in Germany earned an average of 21% less than men. This figure has remained unchanged since 1995. One of the main reasons for this is that women within some professional jobs and forms of employment, as well as within hierarchical structures, are less well paid than their male counterparts and, in some cases, there is still a lower remuneration for work of an equal value. The Federal Government intends to reduce this difference to 10% by 2030. This is to be achieved through measures which support the compatibility of family and career, such as the expansion of day nurseries, parental allowance and carer's allowance, as well as through the introduction of minimum wages.⁴² Another indicator discussed in the German Sustainability Strategy is the number of women employed in managerial positions within business. More precisely, the proportion of women on the board of directors of enterprises which are market-listed and subject to co-determination, are measured. In September 2016, women held an average 27.3% of the positions. Since 2016, these enterprises have had a legal obligation for women to hold 30% of the positions on the board of directors; otherwise, these positions remain vacant. In the case of 20 DAX companies, the required ratio was met; however, a mere 9.4% of the members of the executive board were female. In 76% of all the boards of directors, there were no women at all. The third indicator relates to the professional qualification of women and girls through

⁴¹ Loc. cit., p. 96.

⁴² Loc. cit., p. 100.

German development co-operation. The target is for the number of girls and women who enjoy professional qualification measures within the framework of development co-operation, to increase from the current 350.000 to 470.000 by 2030.

Time and time again, the Protestant Church in Germany has spoken out about issues relating to social and economic inequality. Thus, in its 2015 memorandum “Solidarity and Self-Determination in a Changing Working World“, it laments that capital income has increased more than employees’ income.⁴³ It concludes that growing inequalities, in a national as well as an international context are not acceptable from the viewpoint of Christian ethics: “In the long run, the growth in social inequality cannot be a positive force when it comes to social cohesion or social justice in any society in the world. If we are to call for the people in our society to be able to participate in society, as is essential to a Christian ethical approach, we cannot merely accept social inequality.”⁴⁴ The document consequently presses the state to actively advance the reduction of inequalities, e.g. through the taxation of income, through transfer and benefit payments by the state. “The distribution of income cannot simply be left to the market. Individuals with high income need to contribute more to maintain a functioning society and the weaker members of society need more support.”⁴⁵

5.3.3 ... as a Challenge for the Churches and Diaconal Ministry

The churches are involved in numerous areas of work which aim to reduce inequality in Germany, in nations of the South, and also between nation states. However, there is a great deal left to do, even in terms of church ministry.

(1) In **Germany**, diaconal ministry is important, wherever the people concerned who need support are at the fringes of society, or are disadvantaged, or wish to take advantage of advice and help to escape hardship. Together with the regional churches, diaconal ministries advocate in various ways that all people should be able to participate in society on an equal footing. There are a number of diverse projects led by the Protestant churches and diaconal agencies which promote greater participation and inclusion. Churches, congregations and diaconal institutions are able to contribute to the creation of an awareness of difference, variety and diversity, as well as an understanding that

43 Solidarity and Self-determination in a Changing Working World - A Memorandum of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) on work, social partnership, and trade unions, 2015 https://www.ekd.de/ekd_en/ds_doc/solidarity_and_self_determination.pdf

44 Loc. cit., p.7

45 Loc. cit., p. 28

these are both enriching and stimulating in discussions. An appreciative way of living and working together means breaking down barriers, creating access for all and designing a culture of participation and shared involvement within diaconal agencies and local communities. Joint projects also serve to promote this purpose, e. g. projects initiated by the churches and diaconal ministries to support the fight against poverty, enhance the encounter and co-operation of people of various social backgrounds, thereby strengthening neighbourhoods and promoting inclusion.⁴⁶ These include the many foodbanks, the Vesperkirchen (a combination of church and social enterprise; note of the translator), soup kitchens and clothes and book shops, as well as community cafés in church halls and shops that are run by the church and diaconal agencies in the pedestrianised areas of small towns and big cities.⁴⁷ People in privileged positions can learn much from the daily fight for survival of people on the margins. As we embark upon our joint quest, it is important to understand that which supports our life together and that which destroys it.

Such processes of collaborative searching for new ways of living together are of great importance for many reasons, one being that the churches begin to understand that the economic and social inequalities within society, which they are lamenting, can also be found within the structures of their own organisations. This is not only true in an international sphere, but also within the Protestant churches in Germany, as well as within diaconal institutions. Even if the divergence between salaries in the churches is very different from those in the private sector, it is clear that salary differentials also still occur within the regional churches and diaconal institutions. In the upcoming debates in regional synods and budget committees, for the sake of their own credibility, the churches should endeavour, more than ever before, to reduce inequalities and adequately pay their own staff.⁴⁸ The Protestant Church and diaconal agencies predominately employ women; more than 70 percent of the employees are female (cf. 3). However, many people employed by the churches and diaconal institutions work in social care and within other caring professions and, even though these professions are connected with great responsibility for the health and well-being of people, they are characterised by a comparatively low pay grade. A strategy to increase the pay scale of these particular professional groups, that are so important for the profile of the churches and the diaconia, still needs to be devised.

46 By way of example, the joint initiative of Diaconia and the Evangelical churches: "Wir sind Nachbarn. Alle" needs to be mentioned, through which church communities, providers of diaconal services, associations, day-care facilities, schools, as well as other institutions, work to generate more cohesion and a greater sense of community in a locality. Cf. www.wirsindnachbarn-alle.de.

47 Cf. www.diakonie.de. The number of foodbanks has surged in recent years; cf. www.tafel.de/.

48 In particular, this applies to the approximately 460,000 staff members employed by providers of diaconal services, who are facing the difficult challenge of holding their position on the market and, at the same time, doing justice to their own diaconal standards.

The National Poverty Conference

The National Poverty Conference (Nationale Armutskonferenz; nak) was founded in the autumn of 1991 as the German section of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN). It is an alliance of organisations, charities (amongst which are Caritas and Diakonie) and initiatives which advocate proactive politics to fight poverty. The nak sees itself as a network which is primarily involved in the area of political lobbying and public relations. Together with the Advisory Board for the German government’s Poverty and Wealth Report (Beirat zum Armuts- und Reichtumsbericht für die Bundesregierung) for instance, as well as other organisations, it has initiated a national awareness-raising campaign concerning poverty and takes part in the campaign ForTeil (Forum Teilhabe – forum participation). In specialist conferences, the nak develops so-called “socio-political balance sheets” about specific aspects of poverty such as child poverty, poverty and health or socio-cultural minimum subsistence level (Hartz IV); and disseminates them in press conferences. In addition, it releases statements concerning current debates within society and policy proposals. At a European level, it plays an active part in socio-political events organised by the European Commission, such as the socio-political forum, and participates in conferences and seminars organised by the international network EAPN. The co-operation in the nak also extends to an involvement at a federal-state level, as well as at district and local level. Thus, there are already five regional anti-poverty conferences at a federal state level (Saarland, Lower Saxony, Thuringia, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Saxony), as well as further regional alliances. The German Bishops’ Conference and the Protestant Church in Germany are guest members of the nak. Currently, Barbara Eschen, Director of Diaconia Berlin-Brandenburg, is the chair. (www.nationale-armutskonferenz.de)

Association “Gewaltfrei handeln” (Non-Violent Action)

The Association “Gewaltfrei handeln” (Non-Violent Action) is rooted in the work of Christian ecumenical peace-building and campaigns for non-violence. It is particularly adept in its combination of specialist expertise in training, as well as further education programmes, for civil conflict management and a spirituality which is capable of connecting multiple religious faiths. Within its own structures, it pays equal salaries and employs consensual decision-making procedures, thereby setting an example for the overcoming of inequalities. The association’s mission statement contains the following:

“Mission

We are working for the advancement of a non-violent culture of conflict and advocate non-violence and arms reduction. In order to achieve this, we require that there be a change in personal attitudes so as to enable people to embrace an attitude of non-violence. Through training, and further education, in conflict management and non-violent action, we contribute to this change. Our actions are based upon Jewish-Christian roots. We are open to people of all religions and worldviews, providing a space for the development of a non-violent attitude in every individual.

More Precisely

Through our education and training, we forge the connection between non-violent action with specialist competencies and a spirituality which is capable of connecting multiple faiths. We offer workshops and seminars to various target groups. Extra-occupational training and further education to become a specialist and/or trainer for non-violent conflict management, facilitate the learning experiences that have a formative influence upon a trainee’s life. In the association, we ourselves practise and develop what we teach in our educational work. Important decisions are made in consensus and all members of staff at the agency receive equal pay.” (<https://www.gewaltfreihandeln.org/>)

(2) In the **international sphere**, the Church Development Service and the missions agencies, along with their partners and the churches' partnership activities, pursue the goal to support people in specific hardship and to reduce poverty, thereby making it possible to have an income and to participate in society. At the same time, the church agencies help their partners promote political, economic and social rights and reforms within their nations. Thus, in more than 90 countries, Bread for the World supports more than 600 projects which aim to eradicate poverty, help people exercise their basic political, social and economic rights, and advocate the strengthening of social security systems across the globe. In 2016, Bread for the World received donations amounting to 61.8 million Euros; of which 54.4 million Euros came from the Church Development Service and 141 million Euros from federal funds.⁴⁹ In addition, the annual financial commitments of the regional churches, church districts and local congregations for similar projects undertaken within the framework of their partnerships alongside other churches across the globe, are estimated to be at least a double-digit million Euros. Currently, within the area of migration, the churches are intensely involved in practical work to help refugees, as well as lobbying for improved policies concerning asylum and migration. Based upon their practical experiences, time and time again, the churches and their agencies point out structural causes of problems which can be alleviated, but not overcome, through individual offers of support. With regard to the increased necessity of international co-operation, as described in Agenda 2030, it is important that the churches finance the Church Development Service from the income raised through taxes, as well as through donations; at this point, it is not feasible for this kind of engagement to decrease, but rather, it needs to increase.

SDG 10 affects the churches' own national and international network of relationships, and they are challenged, within their own organisations and in terms of their own priorities, to set an example of brotherly and sisterly solidarity for others by sharing their resources more than ever before. In spite of the contraction of the size of congregations in many churches across Germany, due to demographic change and increasing secularisation, when compared with churches in other nations, the Protestant churches in Germany are still very well equipped, both financially and structurally, and should therefore make even greater use of such advantages to support the work of the churches in other nations; including their implementation of the SDGs. Whilst there are already numerous financial streams flowing from German churches into *partner churches* across the globe (budgetary support, project funding, financing of

49 Cf. Annual Report of Bread for the World, 2016; www.bread.org/bread-newsletter-october-2016. German: Jahresbericht von Brot für die Welt für 2016; https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fileadmin/mediapool/40_Ueber-uns/Jahresbericht_2016.pdf.

staff members, educational grants, assistance in emergencies etc.), a greater commitment is needed in order to expand these programmes in the partner churches and especially to strengthen those programmes which aim to make churches and communities more financially independent in the future (e. g. through capital accumulation by their own means or by way of measures which produce an income).

(3) Issues of **gender equality** have been addressed within Protestant churches – in parallel to developments within society – for a long time. In the Church, women were gradually given active and passive electoral rights (albeit there was some delay) for church governing bodies and synods at church district and regional church level.⁵⁰ The full legal equality of women and men to hold a pastoral office was established by law in the 1970 s and 1980s. The last exception to this rule, such as the right of veto for male ministers in Bavaria, was eradicated in 1997.⁵¹ Triggered by the “New Women’s Movement”, various issues have been discussed since the late 1970 s in the Protestant Church, such as the promotion and enforcement of the formal non-discrimination of women and the equal participation of women in all areas of the Protestant Church. Resolutions such as those made by the EKD-Synod of Bad Krozingen in 1989, concerning the communion of women and men in the Church, constituted an actively promoted equal opportunities policy within the churches and declared the equal participation of women in all offices, ministries and leadership positions to be an objective, thus ending the legitimization of patriarchal traditions within the Church for religious reasons, as well as incorporating the so far discounted perspectives of women into theology, church history and liturgical practice. Since this time, many avenues towards gender equality have been forged, in regional churches and the EKD; and yet, there is still more to be done by way of implementation.

The discourse about the discrimination of women in the Church, as well as measures by which this discrimination might be ended, began in congregations, regional churches and the EKD with the themed decade, from 1988 to 1998, of “Churches in Solidarity with Women” of the World Council of Churches. In this, the examination and discussion of women’s experiences of violence and the significance of theology and the Church for the legitimization of violence has always played an important role.⁵²

50 On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage, the EKD’s Study Centre on Gender Issues in Church and Theology will publish, in 2018, a supplemental volume to the Gender Equality Atlas, which addresses the history of the political participation of women in the Evangelical churches.

51 Gleichstellung im geistlichen Amt, Ergänzungsband 1 zum Atlas zur Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern in der evangelischen Kirche, Hannover 2017.

52 Cf. the report on violence against women: Gewalt gegen Frauen als Thema der Kirche. Ein Bericht in zwei Teilen. Im Auftrag des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland herausgegeben vom Kirchenamt der EKD, Gütersloh 2000.

An EKD-statement on the topic of genital mutilation was intended to raise awareness about this grave violation of human rights within the Church, as well as amongst partners in mission, the ecumenical world and development service; and to re-inforce the criminality of this practice in Germany.

In most regional churches, as well as in the EKD, departments for women's affairs were established in the 1990s, so as to promote gender equality within the Church. Today, in 15 of the 20 regional churches, equal opportunities departments or staffing structures work to support the effective implementation of gender equality within the Church. Qualification programmes and mentoring are to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions. Targets for a balanced allocation of positions within governing bodies can be found in various legal norms of the churches (laws, regulations, rules etc.). In 2013, the EKD adopted an "Act on Appointments to Governing Bodies", which introduced the so-called zip merging system for EKD committees. Some regional churches have applied these regulations to the ecclesiastical law that pertains to regional churches. As yet, it is unclear as to whether the regulations will serve their purpose on a more permanent basis, as they do not specify sanctions in the case of non-compliance. The Gender Equality Atlas, published by the Evangelical Church in 2014, identifies, amongst other findings, a strikingly low proportion of women in the intermediary tiers of management within the EKD: a mere 21%. The 2017 study "Kirche in Vielfalt führen. Eine Kulturanalyse der mittleren Leitungsebene der evangelischen Kirche" (leading the Church in diversity; a cultural analysis of the middle-management level of the Evangelical Church), clearly reveals the need for action in terms of the procedures used for the selection of personnel and the working conditions within regional churches. As before, stereotyped gender images and the non-transparent outworking of the procedures prevent the churches' management personnel from becoming more diverse. The lack of compatibility between the various offices and family responsibilities, as with dual-career arrangements, is also placing new challenges at the feet of the regional churches, which need to be addressed in the coming years.

With regard to the compatibility of family and career, the Church sees itself as an advocate for matters pertaining to families, applying an extended notion of family. However, a family-oriented human resources policy is, as yet, rarely implemented in church and diaconal institutions on a regular basis.⁵³ Whilst the ecclesiastical employment law – in contrast to the current legal regulations – generally includes the possibility of

53 Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der EKD (2012): Familienorientierte Personalpolitik in Kirche und Diakonie, Hannover; https://www.si-ekd.de/download/Familienorientierte_Personalpolitik.pdf.

applying a time limit to part-time employment, employees are often dependent upon the attitude of the respective superior as to whether the opportunities for compatibility can indeed be utilised. In order for a family-oriented human resources policy to become more established, the churches and diaconal ministries developed an “Evangelisches Gütesiegel Familienorientierung” (Protestant family-friendly employer seal of approval) in 2017, to support church and diaconal institutions in the establishment of family-oriented human resources policies. In the area of gender equality, as in many other areas, the Church and diaconia are, as ever, called to point out the continual emergence of challenges for politics and society.

5.4 Protecting the Climate, Promoting the Coal Phase-out and Sustainable Mobility

5.4.1 ... in the Agenda 2030

As one of the goals of international environmental policies, the efforts to preserve the integrity of creation are particularly apparent in the endeavours to protect the climate. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro 25 years ago, numerous milestones have been reached on the path towards limiting the average warming of the earth; in particular in the form of the Kyoto Protocol of December 1997 and the Paris Agreement of December 2015, which declared that man-made global warming is to be reduced to well below 2 degrees Celsius; if possible, to 1.5 degrees Celsius below pre-industrial levels. All nations of the earth recognise this agreement – except Nicaragua, Syria and, most recently, the USA, following the policy changes made by President Trump.

The SDGs were adopted four months before the Climate Change Conference of Paris. SDG 13 calls us to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”. It also refers to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the relevant negotiations. Thereby, it seeks to ensure the continuity of the goals of the Rio Process. Data is to be collected which includes, for instance, the number of nations reporting that they have integrated climate protection measures into their national policies, strategies and planning processes. Above and beyond this, the negotiators for SDG 13 related the commitments adopted in Paris to reduce greenhouse gases in a complementary fashion to challenges such as early warning, adaptation and risk minimisation. In such a way, the first target urges that “stronger efforts are needed to build resilience and limit climate-related hazards and natural disasters”. Consequently, education and awareness-raising, as well as human and institutional capacities, are

to be strengthened. Multifaceted connections can be made with other SDGs, such as SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 2 (agriculture) or 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). Since it is transformation and thereby structural changes which are required, social problems also need to be addressed (see SDG 8 concerning work and SDG 10 on inequality), with particular regard to vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The implementation of the climate goals reveals, particularly in developed nations such as Germany, that the coal phase-out and sustainable mobility are particular challenges. The Agenda 2030 is lacking a clear commitment to the coal phase-out. Rather, SDG 7 purports that “universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services” is to be ensured, whereby “by 2030 the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix is to be substantially increased”. In addition, research and technology, as well as “investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology” for renewable energy and fossil fuels, are to be promoted.

In recent years, traffic – predominately air traffic, motorised individual transportation and goods traffic – have not met the reduction targets necessary for the achievement of the climate goal specified for 2020; and fall short by a significant margin. The reason for this is not simply that the plans for an expansion of electric mobility is unable to be realised, but also, it is a result of a continuous rise in the levels of passenger and goods transport. Mobility is not represented directly as a distinct development goal within the 17 SDGs. Mobility does play a special role however, within the achievement of other SDGs: those of food safety and health, energy and infrastructure, and in particular regard to the goal of “sustainable cities and communities” (SDG 11). Accordingly, by 2030, access to “safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all” is to be provided, in particular through the expansion of public transport.

5.4.2 ... in the German Sustainability Strategy

In its National Sustainability Strategy, the Federal Republic of Germany has included the climate goal in multiple sections: It is central to the goals presented in indicator 13.1.a: the further reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in CO₂-equivalents. Compared with the level in 1990, the German government aims to reduce emissions by 40% by 2020. Given that a reduction by a mere 27.8% was presumed to have been achieved by 2015, it is currently highly questionable as to whether it is still possible to reach the goal. Further reductions are to follow by the middle of the century: a minimum of 55% by 2030, 70% by 2040 and finally, 80–95% by 2050. Turning our attention to a second indicator, it has been reported that international payments have

predominately been sent to developing and emerging nations for the reduction of greenhouse gases, as well as to assist with adaptation to climate change.

In the discussions surrounding the transition to energy supply systems that are fit for the future, without which the achievement of the climate protection goals would not be possible, it has become increasingly clear that burning coal may only be considered as a transitional provision and should be ended as soon as possible. The necessary restructuring of entire industrial and mining regions is causing the emergence of social problems which are not easily overcome: Professional competencies and knowledge are no longer needed and areas of employment disappear on a large scale. On the other hand, communities which would have been vacated had mining continued, are being preserved. At this point, decisions have to be made about a long-term infrastructure; one that is fit for the future. Following the phase-out of nuclear power, it is now the coal phase-out which needs to be planned and implemented. Time limits need to be set and political decisions need to be made, which determine the point from whence the use of coal and its extraction or import is to be reduced, and finally discontinued. The predominant proportion of today's known fossil fuel reserves must remain underground, if the climate protection goals are to be reached.

Whenever the planning and building of new coal power stations is considered, the critical moment in time has already been surpassed. This is because, in terms of their operation, coal power stations are inflexible and would therefore be outdated in any new structure of electricity supply. Currently, scenarios are being discussed which provide for the phase-out of brown coal by 2030 and pit coal by 2040 – assuming that renewable energy will be in full supply by 2050. Moreover, any newly erected coal power stations would have already reached the end of their economic lifetime by the middle of the century. However, the criterion of economic viability depends very much upon the relevant political structural framework. The only reason why the use of brown coal is currently so inexpensive is that guidance by the European emissions trade seems to be insufficient, as too many CO₂-emissions allowances are on the market.

A coal phase-out would thus entail:

- making the European emissions trade an effective instrument to better internalise the external effects on electricity production costs of the various energy sources;
- immediately terminating the planning and construction of any new facilities;
- allowing the extraction of brown coal exclusively where it is viable within the framework of capacity planning for a phase-out by 2030, and, within this context, reassessing the authorisation of new open-pit mining areas – such as the one in Lusatia;

- swiftly preparing and implementing the legal structural conditions of the phase-out, so as to avoid mishaps such as those which occurred during the time of the nuclear phase-out.
- ending capital investments in brown coal, pit coal and any respective energy generation within the framework of a phase-out scenario (divestment), or else continuing this form of capital investment, purely as an “engagement-approach”.

Three mobility indicators have been incorporated into the list of indicators presented in paragraph 11.2 of the German Sustainability Strategy. In this arena, it is obvious that, especially in relation to the final energy consumption of goods transport, it has not been possible to compensate an increase in road freight through technical progress. In addition, the environmental impact of mobility, particularly in Germany, has been recently brought to the forefront of public attention by the “Diesel emissions scandal”. Whilst the considerations surrounding the reorganisation of mobility are not new, neither have they become less topical or less urgent. They include: traffic avoidance through changes to the transportation of goods and also (involuntary) mobility as it affects public transport, for instance by avoiding flows of commuters through intelligent settlement patterns; a further increase of efficiency, which will be reflected in energy consumption per tonne or passenger kilometre; the expansion of alternative forms of transport; a transition to low-emission propulsion technologies; through the promotion of (amongst other means) non-motorised transport; and finally, changes to the planning of the long-term legal and structural framework.

5.4.3 ... as a Challenge for the Churches

Many Evangelical churches have set themselves their own reduction goals. In the resolution of November 2008, the Synod of the EKD presented the EKD Council with some far-reaching goals and measures for the practical implementation of climate protection, in the form of a request, the aim of which was to prompt the EKD Council into an intensive dialogue with its member churches concerning issues relating to our responsibility for creation:⁵⁴

1. “The Council of the EKD recommend that, by 2015, the member churches aim to achieve the goal of reducing their CO₂-emissions by 25% – compared with the base year 2005. In addition, we request the member churches to establish round table discussions addressing the issues of climate change.

⁵⁴ https://www.ekd.de/synode2008/beschluesse/beschluss_schoepfung.html.

2. The Council of the EKD recommend that the member churches promote, within society, the necessary change of thinking required in relation to energy and climate change policies, through educational and youth work, in churches and church institutions; and in this, to make particular use of the study “Zukunftsfähiges Deutschland in einer globalisierten Welt“ (a Germany which is fit for the future in a globalised world).
3. The Synod adopts recommendation X of the message set out at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu and asks the EKD Council to advocate a shared European Ecumenical Day of Creation, to be celebrated between 1st September and 4th October. The Council of the EKD is requested to report to the Synod on the level of implementation after three years.”

During relevant climate reports, in 2011 and 2014, the Synod of the EKD has taken note of interim reports on these goals and responded by adopting further resolutions regarding their implementation. At the time, it had already been ascertained that the “Strategic Development of National Climate Protection Initiatives“ of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) had been able, to some extent, to achieve a certain standardisation of procedures. Any regional church or church district desiring to make use of the programme, can take advantage of a consultation with the “Project Office on Climate Protection” regarding the application and implementation processes. In addition, the EKD is partnering with “Klima-Kollekte” (carbon compensation fund drive), which is now active in the ecumenical, as well as in the international world; and will aid the offsetting of remaining CO₂ emissions. Meanwhile, well over half of the regional churches are involved in the implementation of an integrated climate protection model.

In the climate report of 2017, which was received by the Synod of the EKD in November 2017,⁵⁵ it is assumed that the savings goal for 2015 – a reduction of emissions by 25% compared with 2005 – can, in all probability, be collectively reached by the member churches of the EKD. In a new resolution relating to issues of climate policy, the Synod of the EKD has requested that the EKD, the member churches and agencies, once more, realise the goal of reducing their emissions by 40% by 2020. In order to achieve this, sufficient financial means, in particular investment-related measures with regard to buildings, need to be made available; in addition, models for sustainable mobility and environmentally-friendly procurement need to be implemented.

⁵⁵ Hans Diefenbacher, Oliver Foltin, Rike Schweizer, Volker Teichert (2017): Klimabericht für die Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland 2017. https://www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds_doc/s17-10-1-klimabericht.pdf.

Even after the discontinuation of the financial support provided by the national climate protection initiative, the work of consultation and education needs to continue. Within the context of carbon neutrality, the churches are collectively being challenged to plan further interim goals by 2030, which are to be reached by 2050.⁵⁶

The Green Cockerel/The Green Rooster Environmental Management for Church Communities

The “Green Cockerel” or the “Green Rooster” – the name of the initiative changes according to the location within Germany – is an environmental management system specifically geared towards congregations and church institutions. It is based on the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), as well as the international environmental management standard DIN EN ISO 14001.

Different to EMAS and ISO 14001 however, the “Green Cockerel/Rooster” scheme specifically targets the conditions within church institutions and, since it is more bespoke, it requires less effort to implement, whilst, at the same time, ensuring similar efficacy. The scheme guarantees simplified application within congregations, which are predominately sustained by the work of volunteers. Any congregation can introduce the “Green Cockerel/Rooster” system. Participating congregations are advised by voluntary environmental auditors. The requirements of the “Green Cockerel/Rooster” certification have been laid down in a manual and documented in a handbook. These aids explain to the congregation, step by step, how they are to acquire a certified environmental management system: one which is associated with the continual improvement of its environmental performance. It is the goal of the “Green Cockerel” to continually improve the environmental performance of the audited institutions. This not only applies to climate protection, but also to a reduction of water consumption and waste production; and even applies to aspects of environmental education or public relations work. Alongside the conservation of the environment, the environmental management system is also beneficial in that the running costs of the organisation can be reduced, thus enlarging its financial scope.

Source: KirUm-Dokumentation “Klimaschutz konkret: Grüner Hahn/Grüner Gockel, Informationen zum Kirchlichen Umweltmanagement”, Stuttgart Oktober 2008 (This edition is out of stock).

Between 1999 and 2002, the “Green Cockerel/Rooster” was developed by the environmental department of the Protestant Church of Westphalia and the Protestant Church in Württemberg, alongside numerous other partners, within the framework of a project initiated by the German Federal Environmental Foundation (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt; DBU). The main protagonists of the churches’ environmental management have joined forces in the KirUm network, an organisation which provides a number of services, as well as opportunities for networking, under the institutional roof of KATE e.V. Nearly 70 church organisations are members of the KirUm network. Alongside the Church Office of the EKD, with its agency in Berlin, sixteen regional churches have already joined environmental certification systems – either EMAS or Green Cockerel/Green Rooster.

Source: This text is partly based upon Teichert, Volker / Tenzer, Frank / Zeibig, Michael (2011): Alternative Globalisierung im Dienst von Menschen und Erde. Karlsruhe: Abteilung Mission und Ökumene der Evangelischen Landeskirche in Baden, 34 ff.

⁵⁶ Beschluss der 12. Synode der EKD auf ihrer 4. Tagung zum Engagement für Klimagerechtigkeit; https://www.ekd.de/ekd_ds/doc/s17-2-6-Beschluss-zum-Engagement-fuer-Klimagerechtigkeit.pdf.

For the churches, the coal phase-out also poses a challenge, as the social consequences of the same are also noticeable within congregations, which are as much affected in the Rhineland as they are in Lusatia. At this point, the Church is required, in its pastoral role, to be, for instance, a mediator between diverse interests, as demonstrated by the “Centre for Dialogue and Change” in Lower Lusatia.

The “Centre for Dialogue and Change” in Lower Lusatia

With the establishment of its “Centre for Dialogue and Change” (Zentrum für Dialog und Wandel; ZDW), the Protestant Church in Berlin, Brandenburg and Silesian Upper Lusatia (EKBO) has embarked upon a new venture. On 1st September 2017, this joint institution of the regional church and the four Lusatian church districts within the EKBO was launched as a way of lending the churches’ support to the structural change in Lusatia.

The ZDW offers a platform for communication between the different participants that are working, in diverse fields, towards a better life in Lusatia. Through the ZDW, appropriate forms of dialogue will be developed, as well as workshops which address the future; and all these will emerge from an exact assessment of the situation, as well as from conversations between people who live in Lusatia and work for Lusatia. In addition, the partner relationships of the EKBO, particularly Poland and the Czech Republic, will be involved.

In relation to this, General Superintendent Martin Herche, the Chair of the advisory board, explained: “The challenges in Lusatia, as regards the protracted structural change, are enormous, but there is no reason for resignation. I admire all those who work with their hearts and minds for the shaping of a good future in the region. Our church will support the great commitment of the people in the region and would like to actively participate in the creative process, in a distinctive way, alongside the Centre for Dialogue and Change.”

The foundation of the Centre was based upon a decision made by the regional Synod. Initially, the regional church decided to commit to 100,000 Euro per year for six years; the church districts of Cottbus, Lower Lusatia, Silesian Upper Lusatia and Senftenberg-Spremberg offering altogether 25,000 Euro per year.

Source: Niederlausitz aktuell, 8.9.2017; <http://www.niederlausitz-aktuell.de/cottbus/68410/lausitzer-strukturwandel-zentrum-fuer-dialog-und-wandel-in-cottbus-eroeffnet.html>.

Another practical example which demonstrates that the coal phase-out poses a challenge to the churches, is the issue of recommendations to the churches about the investment or divestment of capital in coal extraction. Such recommendations can be found, e. g., in recent Synod resolutions which suggest that the churches’ investment capital from coal, oil and gas contractors should be gradually withdrawn.

Divestment for the Coal, Oil and Gas Industry

In May 2017, the Protestant Church in Berlin, Brandenburg and Upper Lusatia (Evangelische Landeskirche Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz; EKBO) was awarded the “Positive-Divestment-Award” by the group Fossil-Free Berlin; in recognition of the fact that, since January 2017, the regional church has excluded enterprises from its investments which “produce nuclear energy or generate, in their value chain, more than 30 % of their share of the turnover from the fossil fuels coal, oil and natural gas”. The church is “no longer indifferent to the issue as to where, and for what purpose, their money is invested”, taking into consideration criteria such as social and environmental compatibility and intergenerational justice. Thereby, the EKBO is one of the regional churches in Germany that is extracting the investment of finance from the climate-damaging coal, oil and gas industries. The Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau have already taken this step (in November 2015) and are therefore one of the pioneers in Germany.

Source: <https://gofossilfree.org/de/zur-wahrung-der-schoepfung/>

Since 2015, the Church Investors Group (Arbeitskreis kirchliche Investoren; AKI) of the EKD has been addressing this topic in detail, holding talks with NGOs and service providers for the implementation of climate strategies and, as a result of these conversations, has updated its guidelines⁵⁷ to such an extent that it has decided to issue an investment recommendation in favour of divestment. Amongst other sectors, enterprises which process oil and coal are taken into consideration; in particular the cement and steel industry. In general, the Protestant regional churches do not set their own mobility goals; but rather, regard the management of staff mobility, as well as that of visitors to church institutions, to be an element of their integrated climate protection programmes – whilst, at the same time, conscious of the fact that mobility can engender a whole host of other external effects, besides causing greater problems for the climate. In this vein, the churches’ mobility programmes are to be understood as a contribution towards the achievement of the climate goals. A particularly climate-damaging form of transport is air travel. This is why, in their travel policies, numerous regional churches and institutions have banned flying within Germany for official journeys. Bread for the World, the EKD Church Office, regional churches and church organisations such as the Institute for Church and Society, offset the climate impact of official journeys abroad using a church implemented carbon counter “Klima-Kollekte” (www.klima-kollekte.de). This is, however, merely a first step. It is important to organise more climate friendly ways of mobility in all areas of the churches’ fields

⁵⁷ Guideline for Ethically Sustainable Financial Investment in the German Protestant Church
https://www.aki-ekd.de/fileadmin/Publikationen/245013024-Geldanlage_engl_Internet.pdf.

of action: creating incentives to use public transport (ÖPNV), deploying bikes (with or without the assistance of a small electric motor), organising journeys to large-scale events by means of public transport in a way that is attractive, and much much more.

Travelling by Electric Power in the Church: a Project of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany

One possible way to reduce emissions in the transport sector is to transition to using electric vehicles. Even when travelling by electric vehicles, pastors and other staff members of the churches remain fully mobile. Most motorists in Germany drive but rarely more than 80 km in a single day. The newest generation of electric vehicles manages to travel distances of about 250 km from a single battery charge.

The storage capacity of rechargeable batteries is increasing and the charging periods are decreasing. For the Church in Northern Germany, the type of electric vehicles that are attractive are those which can travel long distances and, in addition, can charge their batteries to almost 100% within 2–3 hours. In order to travel to as many locations as possible with their electric vehicles, the Northern Church is establishing their own charging points. Suitable locations for this purpose are still to be identified. Potential options are, in general, educational institutions and conference centres, accommodation facilities and buildings with large meeting rooms, as well as car parks near churches or parish community centres.

Since the Northern Church plans to install its own charging points, the network of charging infrastructure is becoming more closely meshed and therefore increasingly attractive, making it possible to use electric vehicles within the entire area of the Northern Church. As part of this initiative, the location of existing charging points which belong to the Northern Church, or can be used by staff members of the Northern Church, are being registered. This list will, subsequently, be able to answer the following questions:

- Where can a vehicle be charged? (the exact address and location; e. g. underground car park)
- How can it be charged? (charging capacity and compatibility)
- Who is the contact person? (name, telephone number, does one need to register?)

Source: *Evangelisch-lutherische Kirche für Norddeutschland (ed.) (2017): Kirche für Klima – Elektromobilität; <https://www.kirche fuer klima.de/mobilitaet/elektromobilitaet.html>*

6. What we intend to do in gratitude

It is high time for humankind to find ways to live within the ecological and social boundaries of our planet. Carrying on as usual is not an option. In the coming years, the transformation towards a sustainable life for all must be accomplished successfully. With the Transformation Agenda 2030, we have a compass for sustainability in our hands that has been internationally recognised. We are grateful for the guidance it provides and the fundamental debates it has inspired. We see the great challenges connected with it for politics, enterprises, associations and many other groups within society on the path towards sustainability. This Agenda is, amongst other things, a mandate for every individual to participate in the transformation process afresh “every morning”. There is not a great deal of time left. Global society resembles a tanker which can change direction but only slowly. Only those who initiate a change of course in good time can avoid a collision. In crucial areas, the international community is still on a collision course with the goals of the Agenda. Thus, the number of people who are chronically undernourished has indeed risen since 2015, even though hunger was set to be completely abolished by 2030. It is high time to embark upon the path of sustainability. Even where first successes have been achieved, they remain insufficient – and in no way do they compensate for the continuous failures. In regard to some of the goals of the Agenda, humankind is even moving in the opposite direction at present. Now is the time to act.

The churches have a unique and special opportunity in this “kairos” moment of transformation: Few other protagonists in society have the resources to be “admonishers” and “mediators”, as well as “drivers”. The justice project of sustainable development is firmly established within the Christian message and has long been associated with the ecumenical and conciliar process. From this special position of strength, the churches have a distinct role within the public debate. Churches and their organisations are places in which sustainable development can be tested and implemented. Through trusting in God, faith, spirituality and their global networks, Christians have particular gifts at their disposal which they can now use to inform the Agenda 2030 process. Churches and agencies, congregations and their members must face the challenges of sustainable development. Only in this way can they themselves be strong drivers, credible mediators and authentic admonishers. It is precisely at the juncture of these three functions that the particular opportunity and responsibility of the Church lies.

The text at hand has forged a bridge between theological orientation, political framework-setting and the somewhat concrete action that is needed at all levels. The exploration of four of the concrete topics of Agenda 2030 (inequality, responsible consumption, agriculture and climate protection), has demonstrated, in exemplary fashion, the ways in which churches and communities can act as drivers, mediators and admonishers for transformation. The many inspiring examples that are already in motion render us grateful and encourage us to follow such examples.

Although every contribution makes a difference, it is also clear that there is a large gap between the extensive statements, recommendations and resolutions made by church governing bodies and the concrete implementation within church institutions and communities.

This text therefore expressly encourages the churches to set themselves ambitious goals for sustainable processes of change. In this, they need to be accountable to themselves with honesty, assessing measurable and recognisable results in their own practice. This can, and should, be done at all levels. There needs to be sustainability strategies, or rather, initiatives and plans which detail how the implementation of the Transformation Agenda 2030 can be achieved at the level of the EKD, as well as in regional churches and congregations, just as much as in large church institutions and agencies. This should be accompanied by a transparent and participative planning process plus a reviewing and learning process; measures which are regularly undertaken through independent third parties.

The more that the Church can achieve in this way, the more credible will be our admonitions and challenges directed at others. Strength, promises and visions of faith are important for large-scale, long-term and honest transformation processes.

We know that the time span in which to change direction is short. We confess that the earth belongs to God and not to us. We know that the star on which we live has only been lent to us. As it says in our hymn book:

*“The earth is the Lord’s,
lent to us is the star on which we live;
so be prepared to serve,
Deferred is the time given to us.”*

As we offer our service for the future of this star, God's beautiful earth, in the deferred time that is given to us, we know ourselves to be sustained and encouraged by the spirit of God who is keeping the future open to us – as the third verse of the song relates:

*“Use your strength,
for whoever creates new things, gives us hope;
trust in the spirit pointing us to the future,
God keeps it open.”*

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The international community is facing great challenges: Hunger, poverty and climate change, as well as the struggle for scarce resources, are threatening life on this planet. However, Agenda 2030 now gives us occasion to be hopeful. By way of the Agenda, the member states of the United Nations commit themselves to a global sustainable development which is fit for the future. For the very first time, the transformation envisaged is comprehensive and holistic. It aims to secure the social capital of all and, at the same time, respect the planetary boundaries of the earth.

In this discussion paper, the EKD's Advisory Commission on Sustainable Development affirms the significance of Agenda 2030 and places specific demands upon those in positions of responsibility within politics, civil society and churches. The practical examples given in the Agenda demonstrate what churches and communities can do in order to promote Agenda 2030.