

Independent, visionary, international
Research and consultancy at Öko-Institut



The challenge of sustainability

Even before the onset of the international financial and economic crisis, it was clear that companies can no longer be assured of lasting economic success if they do not focus on sustainability. Furthermore, it is clear from the work of climate researchers and from consideration of the availability of resources that as individuals, we too must adopt sustainable lifestyles in order to conserve nature as the foundation of life for future generations. Policy-making plays a crucial role in creating the necessary framework and underpinning efforts to shape action in these areas.

We at Öko-Institut are convinced that we can create a world that adheres to the principles of sustainability and still allows people's full potential to unfold.

We develop proposals that demonstrate how the vision of sustainable development can be implemented globally, nationally and locally. We aim to use our ideas, understanding and knowledge to persuade relevant stakeholders of the changes that must be made and help them to move in the appropriate direction.

Our work is:

Independent

Our research is conducted at the interface between technology, policy-making and society, with the aim of developing strategies and principles for preserving the environment and hence the resources on which our lives depend. We are value-oriented researchers and advisors, independent of any vested interests, who devise strategies for a future that is sustainable and liveable.

Visionary

Our clients are active in policy-making, business and civil society; for them we develop novel solutions, especially in areas in which changing course seems particularly urgent. Whether the subject is the transition to sustainable energy systems or the Blueprint Germany project, our studies show what the future could look like. We mediate in situations where opposing interests obstruct progress. We develop special research methods in order to uncover new ways of arriving at sustainable, practical solutions.

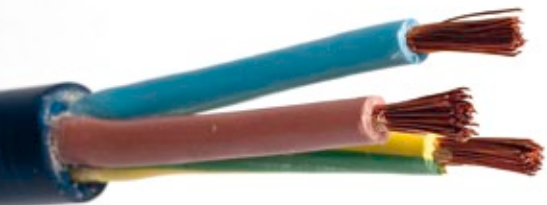
International

We shed light on the questions and challenges posed by aspects of sustainability such as climate protection and resource conservation, taking account of both European and international points of view. Our interdisciplinary project teams combine the expertise of natural scientists, economists, social scientists, engineers, lawyers and communications specialists. In addition, Öko-Institut cooperates with other research institutions and plays an active part in national and international networks, bodies and commissions.

Research. Consultancy. Steering.

Scientifically based analyses and findings, newly developed methodologies, and solutions geared towards implementation are key elements and outcomes of our work. Building on high levels of expertise and interdisciplinary cooperation, we advise our clients on constructive development pathways that lead towards a sustainable future. And we translate knowledge into practice. We mediate between disparate positions and support decision-making with the aim of encouraging eco-friendly lifestyles.

Six examples of our work illustrate our core competencies:



Research

International resource conservation



The challenge:

All over the world, demand for natural resources is mounting. Increased extraction and processing impose ever-greater burdens on people and the environment if non-sustainable practices are allowed to proliferate.



Öko-Institut's approach:

Öko-Institut devises international solutions that demonstrate how resources can be used sustainably and how materials can be recovered through efficient and socially responsible recycling. Its researchers explore ways of improving cooperation between industrialised and newly industrialising countries. They also elaborate the key elements of policies designed to ensure that new technologies and non-food agricultural products boost resource efficiency.



An example of our work:

Recycling e-waste in Ghana and Nigeria

Scrap from computers, televisions or other electronic devices contains valuable metals such as gold, silver and copper as well as pollutants such as mercury and cadmium. In Ghana and Nigeria Öko-Institut has examined how e-waste can be recycled in ways that are environmentally sound and also meet social standards.

Consultancy

Energy and climate policy strategies



The challenge:

Climate research leaves us in no doubt that in order to limit climate change and the associated risks, industrialised countries must reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 95 percent by 2050. Every sector of the economy and society must play a part in this reduction.



Öko-Institut's approach:

Energy conservation and climate protection are key areas of Öko-Institut's work. We devise feasible alternative scenarios for a sustainable economic system based on renewable energy sources and efficient technologies. We use our knowledge to advise decision-makers on sustainable energy and climate policies – internationally, nationally and locally.



An example of our work:

Blueprint Germany: Visions of climate protection in practice

In the study „Blueprint Germany – A strategy for a climate safe 2050“ Öko-Institut shows how the target of reducing greenhouse gases by 95 percent can be met. For the various sectors of the economy we identify the required investment in infrastructure and efficient technologies. In this way we actively influence the discussion on the ways in which society must change to combat climate change.



Core competencies of Öko-Institut

Communication

Corporate sustainability



The challenge:

More and more, industrial enterprises are being assessed not only by their business activities but also by their social and environmental performance. Corporate social responsibility has therefore become a factor in competition.



Öko-Institut's approach:

Öko-Institut works with companies to design sustainable products and technologies. Its researchers also advise companies on the strategic development and operative implementation of environmental and climate aspects. And we help companies communicate sustainability strategies to their stakeholders.



An example of our work:

Calculating the carbon footprint

Selected companies are working with Öko-Institut and other partners in the Product Carbon Footprint (PCF) project to draw up greenhouse gas balances for products and services. The aim is to show companies where there is potential for strategic reductions within the product life cycle. With the German Environment Ministry and Environment Agency Öko-Institut has published recommendations on an internationally standardised method and on clarifying the position on CO₂ labels.



Assessment

Risks of technologies and facilities



The challenge:

Nuclear and conventional facilities and technologies pose challenges to the safety of people and the environment. Radioactive and chemotoxic wastes must be reprocessed or disposed of. The decommissioning or conversion of these facilities must also be carried out in ways that render them safe in the long term.



Öko-Institut's approach:

Our researchers review the safety strategies that are in place, draw up risk scenarios and explore ways of minimising these risks. They take into account both the environmental impacts of the technologies and facilities and the interests of local residents and other civil society stakeholders.



An example of our work:

Safe storage of radioactive waste

The salt mine Asse II, which has been used since the 1960s as a repository for low-level and intermediate radioactive waste, is affected by water inflow. Öko-Institut supports the German government in its assessment of plans for closing the Asse mine and providing safe storage for the radioactive waste. Important geological, technical and radiation protection issues must be considered.



Support

Decision-making tools for sustainable consumption

The challenge:

Achieving ambitious climate and environmental targets calls for major changes not only to products but also to consumption patterns. Greater transparency helps consumers select products that are produced in climate- and resource-friendly ways and encourages people to use products economically. Innovation targets point the way for policy-makers and companies.

Öko-Institut's approach:

Household appliances, telecommunications, food: Öko-Institut develops strategies for sustainable consumption patterns in the most diverse sectors. Its researchers advise the EU Commission and German ministries on product policy legislation and programmes and formulate practical tips for consumers.

An example of our work: **Criteria for awarding the „climate angel“**

The general „Blue Angel“ eco-label with the additional tagline „Protects the climate“ aims to help consumers choose products that are climate-friendly and do not harm the environment. For the 100 most important product groups Öko-Institut identifies criteria for rating the best-performing models as energy-saving and environmentally friendly. The results provide the basis for awarding the blue „climate angel“ and are also incorporated in the European Ecodesign Directive process.



Steering

Ambitious environmental law

The challenge:

Designing sustainable environmental policy requires political management and guidance at international, European and national level. Issues that emerge must be carefully considered from legal, economic and social-scientific points of view.

Öko-Institut's approach:

Whether the subject is waste disposal legislation or ambient pollution control, environmental law or corporate responsibility – our research analyse which steering tools are most effective in enabling environmental goals to be achieved. Interdisciplinary cooperation within project teams is the starting point of any research work.

An example of our work: **Sustainability in capital market and investment law**

Environmental protection, climate change and resource management are assuming ever-greater importance in capital markets – but they have not been integrated into the legal framework. In decisions on investment, risk quantification or company assessments, all risks with economic consequences must be disclosed. Öko-Institut is exploring how the law can ensure that environmental risks and opportunities are identified and disclosed in a suitable form. This is vital to help avoid the errors that led to the last crisis in the financial market.



Öko-Institut at a glance

Öko-Institut is a leading, independent European research and consultancy institute working for a sustainable future. Since the institute was founded in 1977 we have been actively pursuing research for people and the environment. Each year our researchers complete around 200 projects in the following areas:

- Chemicals management
- Energy policy and climate change mitigation
- Emission and ambient pollution control, radiation protection
- International resource conservation
- Agriculture and biodiversity
- Mobility and transport
- Sustainable consumption and production
- Nuclear engineering and facility safety
- Law, policy and governance
- Risk and technology assessment

Öko-Institut is a non-profit association. Our work is financed mainly through third-party, project-based funding. Our key clients include ministries, state and federal agencies, public institutions, industrial enterprises, non-governmental organisations and the European Union.

In addition, contributions and donations from the association's members – of whom there are more than 2,500, including 30 local authorities – lay the foundation for independent research and influential studies.

„The development of Öko-Institut over the last 30 years and more is a success story! The wide-ranging experience gained in cooperation between civil society, policy formulation and business development trends have given the institute an extraordinarily wide experience base and extensive consultancy expertise. The foundation is thus laid for this institute to continue to be of enormous importance in an open, democratic society, now and in the future.“



Prof. Klaus Töpfer,
executive director of the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam, former German environment minister, former executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme.



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