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German Federal Environmental Foundation (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt): A short portrait

Founding

The law on the establishment of this public foundation with legal capacity under civil law was passed with a broad political consensus on 18.7.1990. The office in Osnabrück has been in operation since 1.3.1991.

Financing

The endowment capital (from the German government) comes from the proceeds of the privatization of the steel company Salzgitter AG: some 1.2 billion euros at the time and some 2.2 billion euros today. The yield from the capital can be used for development and support programs. The DBU is one of the biggest foundations in Germany.

Legal representative

The Board of Advisors, made up of 16 members (at the moment 14) appointed by the German government, is the DBU's legal representative. It is comprised of German federal and state politicians and representatives of other socially relevant groups. Chair: Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter; DBU Secretary General: Alexander Bonde

Thematic focuses

1. Tools and expertise for the evaluation of sustainability, and the promotion of the awareness of sustainability and sustainable action;
2. sustainable food sources and sustainable approaches to producing and handling foodstuffs;
3. the development, design and promotion of environmentally friendly mobile consumer goods;
4. renewable energies - promoting a transition to de-central heating, optimizing existing plants and reducing negative environmental effects;
5. climate-friendly and resource-saving construction methods;
6. development and renewal of urban areas with an economic use of energy and resources;
7. reduction of carbon-dioxide emissions in energy-intensive industrial sectors;
8. efficient use of resources based on innovative materials technology;
9. recycling and efficient use of phosphorus and environmentally critical metals;
10. reduction of nitrogen emissions in agriculture;
11. integrated concepts and measures for protecting and managing groundwater and surface water
12. nature protection and sustainable use of nature in both human-use and protected areas;
13. preservation and securing of valuable national cultural assets in the face of harmful environmental factors.

Owing to the DBU's wide range of focuses, all projects with a big environmental impact that meet the requirements laid down in the DBU statutes are in the running to receive subsidies.

Annual presentation of the German Environmental Award, the most lucrative environmental prize in Europe (500,000 euros).

Activities

The DBU supports the creativity of small and medium-sized companies in practically solving environmental problems, and gives incentives for ecological innovations in these companies (exemplary, environmentally friendly, innovative). By promoting products and production methods that are environmentally friendly and healthy, it focuses on a preventive and integrated form of environmental protection and reduces the risks for companies embarking on more sustainable production techniques. It fosters measures that practically and directly protect the environment. It supports the exchange of environmental knowledge between the scientific and business communities and other public or private institutions. It also preserves and secures valuable national assets in exemplary fashion. The DBU backs nature-conservation projects that protect habitats or wild species and that serve to promote a natural, location-specific diversity and a sustainable usage of species and ecosystems.

Statistics

Since the DBU's foundation, some 9,700 projects were subsidized to the tune of more than 1.74 billion euros.

Subsidiaries

The DBU has two non-profit-making subsidiary companies: the DBU Centre for Environmental Communication (ZUK) and DBU Naturerbe GmbH. The ZUK, founded in 1999, supports the DBU by communicating its themes, projects and focuses to the professional public, addressing a wide range of target groups. The subsidiary DBU Naturerbe, founded in 2007, takes care of 70 large nature areas (woods, open countryside, moors), amounting to some 70,000 hectares in nine German states. Its main objectives are promoting and preserving the wealth of animal and plant species in different habitats and increasing the awareness of nature and sustainability issues in the general population.