

## ESD IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES: INTERVIEW WITH JORRIT HOLST



### What characterizes Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in local communities?

People's real lifeworld is in their regions and local communities. Learning, even co-shaping sustainable futures, is always embedded in one's own everyday experiences. It therefore makes sense to link learning about the big questions of our time like climate change, loss of biodiversity and social justice with the learners' local lifeworld. Sustainable regional or municipal educational landscapes are educational networks in which learners search for answers to

current questions related to sustainability together in different formal and non-formal educational settings. Because local communities are at the interface between lifeworld and educational landscape, they hold a key position in the implementation of ESD.

### Among other studies, the monitoring team conducted interviews with experts. What was one of the main findings of these interviews?

In the interview study, experts in the context of local communities were asked what approaches could contribute to the strengthening of ESD. The promotion of the sustainable educational landscapes were mentioned here as a crucial point. In such landscapes, actors cooperate from all educational sectors - from kindergartens, schools, clubs, associations, libraries and many others - in networks and work together to further develop ESD in their region. Local authorities can help in this by organizing and supporting this process. Thereby, it is particularly important to develop specific approaches in local communities and regions and to actively include local actors from all sectors.

„After all, integrating ESD in regions and local communities also means venturing into a learning process together.“

#### RECENT UPDATES FROM THE GERMAN ESD-MONITORING (LINK)

Holst, J., Brock, A., Singer-Brodowski, M., & de Haan, G. (2020). **Monitoring Progress of Change: Implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within Documents of the German Education System.**

Grund, J., & Brock, A. (2020). **Education for Sustainable Development in Germany: Not Just Desired but Also Effective for Transformative Action.**

Singer-Brodowski, M., von Seggern, J., Duveneck, A., & Etzkorn, N. (2020). **Moving (Reflexively within) Structures. The Governance of Education for Sustainable Development in Germany.**

## So ESD is being implemented differently in specific regions and communities. Where could special needs be identified in the studies?

In the end, all local communities and regions are different: they have different conditions and challenges and therefore they also need region-specific approaches. An important role is often played by civil society actors: again and again they appear as drivers of sustainability and ESD in local educational landscapes. At the same time, our analyses of documents and websites show that, structurally speaking, ESD has tended to fully reach only a handful of very sustainability-oriented municipalities. There is certainly considerable room for improvement here. An important prerequisite is that mayors support the process and view ESD and sustainability both as a necessity and as a chance for the development of their regions.

## What do these findings mean for the actors who would like to advocate for the strengthening of ESD in local communities?

Local authorities and networks can proactively take the initiative on many of their regional challenges. For example, by initiating a regional network or by setting up regional ESD funding. Some municipalities, for instance, begin by drafting a municipal voluntary commitment to ESD and sustainability. An

„To move closer to the aim of a sustainable educational landscape, local actors may advocate for the development and qualification of regional contacts or coordinators for ESD.“

important approach here is also to more closely link the often structurally separate areas of education and sustainability in administrations with one another. Part of this is of course training on sustainability within the local administrations themselves. In order to move closer to the aim of a sustainable educational landscape, local actors can also advocate for the development and qualification of regional contacts or coordinators for ESD. Politically, this means – at the local, state and federal level – consciously prioritizing and promoting learning for sustainability. Further information and good examples, among others, are offered by the newly established ESD competence centre ‘BiNaKom’.

## What could be a first step for local authorities or networks that want to implement ESD in their region?

Based on already existing local networks and structures, a first step could be to identify common needs and potential in a collaborative audit and - using them as a springboard - to develop a regional plan of action. As the experts in the interview study emphasized, it is especially important to actively include the different educational actors in the community, for example in task forces or local initiatives. After all, integrating ESD in regions and local communities also means venturing into a learning process together.

## CONTACT

Jorrit Holst

E-Mail: [holst\(at\)institutfutur.de](mailto:holst(at)institutfutur.de)

URL: [www.institutfutur.de](http://www.institutfutur.de)

