



## Climate action in concrete terms

Training and qualification of climate action consultants; handbook for climate action consultants

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#### Project information

##### Support programme

Innovative climate action projects

##### Project duration

1 July 2009 to 30 June 2012

##### Project leader

Bundesverband für Umweltberatung e.V. and  
Deutsches Energieberater-Netzwerk e.V.

##### Project funding reference number

03KSE005A+B

##### Grant sum

650,546 euros

##### Project contact

service@umweltberatung-info.de  
www.klimaschutzberaterdatenbank.de

## Good consulting thanks to good training

Municipal climate action is challenging and multi-faceted – a task that cannot be mastered without the right qualifications and the right partners.

### At a glance

In the early years of the National Climate Initiative (NCI), only few local public servants were capable of implementing comprehensive climate action concepts. Indeed, a clear qualification profile for climate action consulting did not yet exist. There was also a lack of continuing training, targeted information and reference works. The project “Klimaschutz konkret” (Climate action in concrete terms) of the two environmental consulting associations Bundesverband für Umweltberatung (bfub) e.V. and the Deutsches Energieberater-Netzwerk (DEN) e.V. aimed to close this gap. Completed in 2012, the project contributed pioneering work in this area.



Quality seal for climate action consultants



## Wanted: Experts for climate action concepts

With the Integrated Energy and Climate Programme of 2007 and the NCI starting in 2008, the German federal government set important milestones for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Since climate action is not primarily a responsibility of the municipalities, the initial work revolved around building broad acceptance of the topic. A new path towards CO<sub>2</sub> reductions had to be forged for policy, administration and civil society on the ground. This called for the development of the interdisciplinary career of a climate action consultant.

### What were the project goals?

The project aimed to determine the specific needs for continuing education by the individual actors in climate action; introduce a quality assurance of the experts in climate action; and develop a special consulting and qualification offer. This was to contribute to building a structure for consulting municipalities on climate action.

Since 2008, municipalities have been receiving financial support from the NCI in the development of their respective climate action concepts. As part of the support, they must, for example, identify carbon savings potentials and allow for citizen participation. However, since these partially demanding requirements are not a routine part of their day-to-day administrative operations, they often feel challenged in maintaining their level of commitment to climate action. To mitigate this dilemma, the two environmental consulting associations bful and DEN developed a first continuing training project for climate consulting as early as 2009. Four coordinated modules set new quality standards for consulting municipalities about climate action.

## Technical and communicative competence

The DEN provided the technical expertise, and the bful contributed knowledge on citizen participation and communication. Together they designed a package of basic courses and seminars for experts, a handbook, a database of qualified consultants, and a needs assessment of the seminars required by municipal employees.



Project flyer



The project team also conducted workshops specifically for administrative employees. Here it quickly became clear which hurdles are involved in complex grant programmes, especially for smaller municipalities. The insights gained in this way were then incorporated into the development of the training modules.

#### What did the project achieve?

At the end of the project, some 177 orders had been placed for the handbook for climate action consultants, and additional orders were received after the end of the project. However, the number of interested parties fell short of expectations. This was partly due to the fact that a thematically similar manual was provided free of charge by another NCI project.

The database of climate action consultants connects municipalities with experts. A total of 134 consultants, distributed across the federal territory, were active at project end. These met the quality standard of the database and were thus able to acquire the quality seal.

At the end of the project, 199 people had completed the basic course on climate action consulting; and 191 participants had attended the supplementary seminars.

#### Four modules of professionalisation

The main qualification offer consisted of the basic course to become a climate action consultant. It provided knowledge on the handling of grant programmes, project management and marketing, as well as collecting data on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Complementary seminars rounded off this basic qualification. In addition, a two-volume, for-a-fee manual was developed from the course materials during the project. Designed in loose-leaf form, it can be continually updated.

Successful participation in the basic course also entitled the newly qualified climate action consultants to be included in the database on the project website. Over the duration of the project, the database grew into a veritable resource that allowed municipalities to find expertise based on their consulting needs. As an instrument, it is very much in demand, even today. Only those who meet the necessary professional requirements can be included in the database.

#### Long-term results

The “Climate action in concrete terms” project, which ended in 2012, left a lasting legacy with its climate action consultant database, which to this day gives municipalities fast access to qualified advice. The manual has not been updated since 2012.

#### What happened next?

The 2012 version of the manual can be ordered, for a fee, from the Bundesverband für Umweltberatung e.V. The DEN Academy continues to offer the course on climate consulting ([www.den-akademie.de/programm](http://www.den-akademie.de/programm)). And for those seeking a professional who can advise them on climate action, the climate action consultant database ([www.klimaschutzberaterdatenbank.de](http://www.klimaschutzberaterdatenbank.de)) is still available.

## Contribution to climate action

The project’s climate protection impact cannot be quantified directly in saved tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. However, the participation in the training courses qualified professionals to create better climate action concepts for municipalities. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions was facilitated, and would become effective with the implementation of the respective concept. Finally, the comprehensive range of consultations



cultivated a willingness on the part of the municipalities to go the climate action route.

## Lessons learned

The advice platform developed in the project is still available to municipalities.

### The demand is there

199 interested parties attended the basic course to become a climate action consultant as well as the supplementary seminars during the project period. Another 111 people took part in the municipal workshops on needs assessment at the beginning and end of the project. Together, these courses confirmed the significant need for training.

However, the project showed that the introduction of new courses into the market takes time. Instead of a parallel development of several project modules, a step-by-step setup should take place. The training needs assessment and development of course content should be done via workshops with municipalities in the beginning of this process. Once the training needs are established, the development of courses, databases as well as other products catering to the training needs can be commenced. The evaluation and possibly the updating of the learning offers should not be neglected either.

### Tips on using the database

The database of consultants, the core of the project, remains active. To this day, climate action consultants can register on the website. Upon a verification of their qualifications, they are then entered into the registry according to their specialisation.

Interested consultants can choose from two qualification routes that allow for inclusion in the database: one, through the successful participation in the offered course; and two, through demonstrable experience in the development of climate action concepts that subsequently received grants.

### Checklist for success

- Provide an overview of the consulting landscape through the database, thereby promoting visibility for this offer and allowing municipalities to find climate action consultants in their region;
- Develop, or continue developing, course modules successively and gradually adjust course offers;
- Create incentives and opportunities for participation in training offers, taking costs into account.

## Small budgets as an obstacle for continuing education

For municipal employees, finding a way to finance their continuing education is an obstacle that should not be underestimated. For example, course fees have frequently been referred to as a reason for employers to reject of continuing training for their staff. For them climate action tends to be a low(er) priority item. That said, employees in Germany do have the opportunity to make use of government-funded programmes, such as the “Bildungsprämie”, that subsidise continuing education.

The cost of the course manual – 50 euros – was also perceived as a hurdle. Apparently, the publication, despite its high-quality design and make, did not draw the anticipated demand since it was considered to be too expensive.

Since the updating of the loose-leaf collection was discontinued in 2012, this information sheet will offer only a brief review of the manual, for documentation purposes. The first volume contained information on funding programmes and organisations concerned with climate action. Other topics were: content requirements for climate action concepts, accounting tools, materials for public relations work, and selected topics such as construction or traffic. The second volume contained examples of suggestions for action.



The practice-oriented binder was supposed to show how comprehensive climate action concepts might look, how partial concepts (meaning concepts for a particular area of municipal climate action, such as buildings or mobility) have been realised, or how municipalities can learn from one another.

#### Climate action needs your initiative

Since its launch in 2008, the National Climate Initiative (NCI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) has been supporting numerous projects that contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Funding has been given to a broad range of activities, from developing long-term strategies to providing practical assistance and investment aid. With a focus on advancing climate action on the ground, the Initiative benefits consumers, municipalities, businesses and educational institutions.

#### Legal information

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**Sources:** This project summary is based on the final project report and publications in professional journals.