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HOW NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA'S “CLIMATE DISCOURSE” IS PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR DISCUSSIONS ON COMMON AND CONFLICTING INTERESTS AROUND CLIMATE PROTECTION

CASE STUDY | KLIMADISKURS.NRW: BOLSTERING JOINT CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH DIALOGUE

This case study shows how KlimaDiskurs.NRW is facilitating dialogue on potentially controversial climate and energy issues between various stakeholders within the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. It is part of the [Energy Transition Platform](#), a global initiative supporting highly industrialized, carbon-intensive state and regional governments in developing and implementing innovative clean energy policies to accelerate the low carbon transition.

The partner regions of the Energy Transition Platform – Alberta, the Basque Country, California, Hauts-de-France, Lombardy, Minnesota, North Rhine-Westphalia, Silesia, South Australia, Upper Austria and Wales – come together to learn from their global peers, to build strong partnerships and to jointly overcome barriers to the adoption of clean energy models. The Energy Transition Platform is part of the [States & Regions Policy Work](#) and was launched by The Climate Group, alongside the initiative’s lead government, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Stiftung Mercator, in early 2016.

“WHEN IT COMES TO CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION, THINGS CAN QUICKLY BECOME CONTROVERSIAL. AT KLIMADISKURS.NRW, WE TRY TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER’S POSITION AND USE THIS BASIS TO FIND NEW SOLUTIONS THAT CAN MAKE A REAL CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE PROTECTION.”

- Ulrike Schell, Member of the Board of the NRW Consumer Association and Member of the Board of KlimaDiskurs.NRW

WHEN COMPANIES, RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND CIVIL SOCIETY COME TOGETHER TO PROMOTE ENERGY TRANSITION AND CLIMATE PROTECTION

In the last few decades, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) has been undergoing a profound structural transformation aimed at reducing its dependence on fossil fuels and corresponding emissions, while modernizing its local industry and increasing its competitiveness. To achieve this, the NRW state legislature passed an ambitious Climate Protection Act in 2013. The Act was followed by a region-wide participatory process to design a Climate Protection Plan outlining pathways towards state and federal climate goals.

Having recognized the potential of such a collaborative approach to climate protection, a few pioneering stakeholders founded KlimaDiskurs.NRW, a unique organization within Germany. KlimaDiskurs.NRW aims at providing all stakeholders with the opportunity to work together on various climate protection- and energy transition-related topics, in the medium- and long-term. Despite their differing vested interests, these stakeholders are united in their will to jointly pursue a decarbonized, competitive future for NRW.

SPOTLIGHT ON NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA



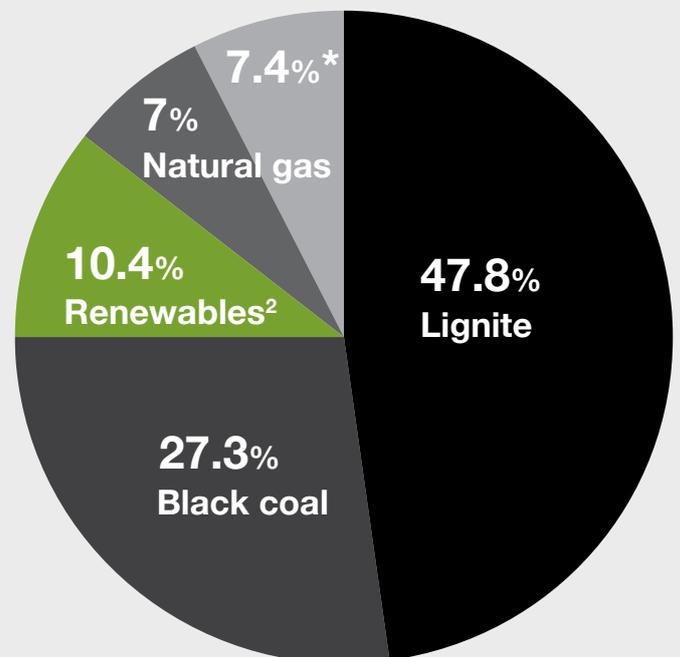
MINISTER PRESIDENT ARMIN LASCHET (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION OF GERMANY, CDU)

GOVERNMENT COMPOSITION CDU AND FREE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (FDP)

POPULATION 17.5 MILLION (2015)

GDP 720 BILLION (2015)

ELECTRICITY GENERATION MIX (2015):



* Others (incl. waste and oil)

KLIMADISKURS.NRW: KLIMADISKURS.NRW IS AN INDEPENDENT ASSOCIATION GATHERING OVER 80 STAKEHOLDERS FROM THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS AND CIVIL SOCIETY. IT PROVIDES A PLATFORM FOR THEM TO DISCUSS CRUCIAL ISSUES AROUND ENERGY TRANSITION AND AGREE ON PATHWAYS TOWARDS A LOW CARBON, PROSPEROUS ECONOMY, WHILE PRESERVING THE REGION'S INDUSTRIAL BASE.

FORMAT

Stakeholders are brought together through various events - public, closed-door, formal or informal - initiated by members or by KlimaDiskurs:

- **Public events:** large-scale and highly-visible networking conferences with key stakeholders from business, civil society and politics.
- **Closed-door events:** discussions held under the Chatham House rule, offering the opportunity to discuss controversial issues and conflicts of interest.
- **Events exclusively for members:**
 - In Brussels and Berlin, members have the opportunity to discuss with members of parliaments, ministries/commissions and associations prior to the adoption of laws or regulations that will have an impact on NRW.
 - Smaller events can also be organized at the suggestion of members, focusing on innovative projects and specific topics relevant to them.

STAKEHOLDERS

KlimaDiskurs.NRW brings together a wide range of stakeholders. The members include:

- Members of the public
- Nature and climate protection associations
- Trade unions
- Religious institutions
- Scientific and research institutions
- Companies of all sizes, from sectors such as chemistry, energy, housing and transport
- Chambers of commerce and trade associations
- Municipalities and municipal service companies (energy, water, public transport, waste, etc.)

The government of North Rhine-Westphalia is also supporting KlimaDiskurs.NRW: ministers play an active role in events, contacts are maintained with relevant ministries such as Environment and Transport, and the events in Brussels and Berlin are run in partnership with the state representations.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

BENEFITS

- **Facilitating dialogue and building trust** through an independent platform that brings together stakeholders from all sectors.
- **Exploring solutions over the long-term** outside the classic election cycles.
- **Providing technical knowledge** by bringing in experts from various sectors.
- **Bringing political attention to crucial topics** – the state government is involved in the platform, with ministers attending events.

TOPICS DISCUSSED

KlimaDiskurs.NRW offers the opportunity to discuss a wide variety of topics, reflecting the diverse interests of its membership base. Among the main topics discussed are **energy-intensive industries**, such as aluminum and chemicals, and **climate-friendly mobility strategies**. The main topic framing the public discussions in 2017 is **digitalization and climate protection**.

A mix of formats is key to achieve progress on controversial issues: public events to generate political interest and public awareness on one side, confidential discussions to resolve existing conflicts of interest on the other.

POLICY TIP

CLIMATE ACTION NRW

BY 2020

25%

GHG emissions
reduction

BY 2030



achieve carbon
neutrality in government
operations

BY 2050

80%

GHG emissions
reduction

Supported by the Climate Protection
Plan.⁵

“NABU NRW HAS BEEN INVOLVED SINCE THE ONSET OF KLIMADISKURS.NRW. IT IS A GREAT PLATFORM TO TALK TOGETHER WITH BUSINESSES, CONSUMERS, TRADE UNIONS AND MANY OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT THE LONG-TERM TASK OF CLIMATE PROTECTION.”

- Josef Tumbrinck, Chairman of the NABU NRW and founding member of the board of KlimaDiskurs.NRW

KLIMADISKURS.NRW

WHAT IS KLIMADISKURS.NRW AIMING TO SOLVE?

NRW is a highly-industrialized region and produces 30% of Germany's energy. Energy-intensive sectors such as steel, chemicals and logistics employ millions of people and are deeply connected to the region's cultural identity.

With the Climate Change Act, all relevant stakeholders in NRW, including citizens across the state, have collaboratively set targets to actively mitigate climate change. Nevertheless, the pathways⁴ for achieving these targets are yet to be defined, requiring numerous negotiations and compromises.

KlimaDiskurs.NRW deals with **the confrontation between the assumed conflicting interests around climate protection and the preservation of the region's industrial base.**

HOW IS IT INNOVATIVE?

Building trust between KlimaDiskurs' members and other political, social and economic stakeholders and decision-makers is crucial for achieving a successful energy transition in NRW. KlimaDiskurs.NRW's approach is innovative because it focuses primarily on this key – but sometimes forgotten – element of trust.

The organization is also **politically independent**, which has enabled stakeholders of all political parties to come together around a common table, overcoming traditional boundaries. In addition, KlimaDiskurs' members can set the agendas and formats of events together, away from their own – sometimes inflexible – industrial associations or governmental institutions.

Because of its independence, KlimaDiskurs can work with members and partners on **mid- and long-term decarbonization pathways**, recognizing that building a sustainable future requires a vision that goes beyond the next election cycle.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO IMPLEMENT AND HOW IS IT FINANCED?

A few stakeholders had already established contacts through the participatory discourse process of the state; the Energy Dialogue. The primary founders of KlimaDiskurs.NRW were environmental groups (BUND NRW, NABU NRW, Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Agenda 21 NRW), the NRW Consumer Association and the director of the Institute for Church and Society of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia.

These groups applied to two local foundations, Stiftung Mercator and Stiftung Umwelt und Entwicklung NRW, to establish KlimaDiskurs.NRW. In April 2013, the organization began its work with three employees in an office in the state capital Düsseldorf. The funding was renewed in 2016 and will end in 2019, after which the organization will support itself through membership fees and other revenue streams.

⁴ Pathway plans provide detailed descriptions of what decarbonization requires in each sector, in terms of the technologies, infrastructure and investments, helping policymakers understand their options, or “pathways,” to achieving GHG emissions reduction targets.

⁵ Klima.nrw.de/verschiedenes/english/

THE NRW BUILDING ALLIANCE FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION⁵

Increasing the average annual building retrofitting rate is one of the main objectives of NRW's Climate Protection Plan. While targets have been set and the technology is available, there are still different paths and timelines towards achieving this goal. The relevant stakeholders have therefore joined forces to create the 'NRW Building Alliance for Climate Protection'. As a political representation of their common interests, the Alliance will constructively support, and provide information on, state and national climate-protection targets related to housing and construction. This unique coalition underlines how the high-quality energetic refurbishment of buildings is creating an important stimulus for the local economy and industry.

5 More information on www.gebaeudeallianz-nrw.de

While the success of KlimaDiskurs.NRW depends partly on its political independence, the support of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia has been key in helping the initiative take off and gain momentum. The organization now collaborates closely with key ministries and the state chancellery.

LESSON LEARNED

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WHAT WERE THE MAJOR CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING KLIMADISKURS.NRW AND HOW WERE THEY OVERCOME?

One of the major challenges for KlimaDiskurs is linked to its very nature: bringing stakeholders together to discuss topics on which they have conflicting views, and overcoming these to reach concrete, concerted solutions.

Some of the topics discussed can also raise specific difficulties. KlimaDiskurs.NRW was initiated around the issue of energy supply, but the focus had to be gradually shifted as the state-level was not appropriate to deal with such a macro-level issue, which is mainly decided at the national level.

RESULTS TO DATE

Because KlimaDiskurs.NRW aims to facilitate constructive dialogue, results may be difficult to quantify and showcase. Nevertheless, it has very practical consequences: for example, stakeholders from KlimaDiskurs.NRW and organizations from the construction and housing industry have joined forces to establish the NRW BUILDING ALLIANCE FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION (see info box).

At the same time, the membership of the organization has grown steadily and substantially while also becoming more diversified. In 2016 for example, the Wuppertal Institute for the Environment, Climate and Energy - an internationally-renowned think tank - became the first scientific and research member. In addition, the city of Wuppertal was also the first municipal member. In 2017, two global companies further enhanced the organization with their membership. **This brought the number of KlimaDiskurs members to 86**, among which 35% are individuals, 29% companies and 26% local and region-wide associations.

KlimaDiskurs.NRW organizes **between 15 and 20 events every year**, and the interest, especially in closed-door events, has been growing. As the network grows in both the diversity of voices it represents and the scope of topics it tackles, KlimaDiskurs.NRW will continue to support NRW through the constructive dialogue required to meet the scale of the state's decarbonization ambitions.

CONNECT WITH KLIMADISKURS.NRW

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CONNECT WITH US IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE ENERGY TRANSITION PLATFORM

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