

Name: Weltfairsteher

Award category: Youth

Organisation: CHANGE – Chancen.Nachhaltig.Gestalten e.V.

Location: Bamberg, Germany

Duration: Ongoing since 2016

Website: www.weltfairsteher.de

Factsheet:

Weltfairsteher - Education is the key to a sustainable future

Think global, act local

Some people think that they cannot make an impact on their own, but this German-wide educational initiative underlines the power of the individual. The Weltfairsteher project illustrates that small changes can deliver results and contribute to the energy transition. The project seeks to engage pupils in science-based challenges: Weltfairsteher breaks down complex topics to easily accessible content that encourages the young to develop their own creative solutions for more sustainable living.

The initiative, started by 15 motivated students, PhD candidates and early-career professionals from a range of backgrounds, takes inspiration from Nelson Mandela's belief that "education is the most powerful tool that you can use to change the world".

Interactive learning

The project is organised into more than 60 challenges in 6 categories: Climate Change, Energy & Mobility, Nutrition, Production & Consumption, Social Responsibility, and Water & Resources. The challenges are free of charge and easily accessible through the project website. Pupils of all grades and throughout Germany develop creative solutions to tackle the challenges, such as measuring the energy consumption of electronic appliances.

In the 'Carbon footprint' challenge, for example, students calculate their individual carbon footprint based on their daily-life habits and find out how they can reduce their impact. This empowers them to make science-backed decisions to minimise their CO2 footprint while reflecting critically on other aspects, such as the social responsibility of sustainability. After completing a number of challenges, classes receive prizes such as fair-trade chocolate or Oxfam vouchers, which are designed to stimulate even more engagement and reflection.

"An important element of the energy transition is awareness that individuals can drive change," says Maximilian Held, founder of the Weltfairsteher project and currently a PhD candidate at ETH Zurich. If each of the 1,800 participating pupils were to reduce their energy consumption per year by 20% for example, this would result in a total reduction of more than 400 MWh of electricity every year –

enough to power dozens of homes, and not taking into consideration that pupils act as multipliers among their families and friends. Reducing energy use does not only save money, it also helps to reduce the amount of pollution emitted from non-renewable sources of energy.

Empowering teachers, creating tomorrow's leaders

Weltfairsteher also empowers teachers to teach sustainability topics in a playful, interactive manner. The challenges, that can be downloaded free of charge from the project's website, come along with didactic materials that combine the latest scientific insights with interactive teaching concepts. Teachers are not required to create new teaching material, and the challenges are designed to fit into existing curricula. The project also offers workshops for teachers and students to train them on how to introduce sustainability into the curriculum.

Weltfairsteher is working steadily on the integration of its challenges into the German federal government's 'Curriculum Framework: Education for Sustainable Development' initiative, a contribution to UNESCO's Global Action Programme 'Education for Sustainable Development'. This broad strategy aims to encourage the mainstreaming of sustainable development in school curricula, and is targeted at senior education executives.

Since September 2019, the project has been receiving financial support from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation & Development. "Our aim is to fully integrate the project into the German curriculum and make sustainability a core part of education," says Held. He continues: "Our second long-term vision is to go beyond the borders of Germany. We could collaborate with projects abroad, or establish online teaching in English for all European countries." Through engaging young people with thought-provoking challenges, Weltfairsteher is encouraging the next generation to think about sustainable solutions for themselves.