

Greenhouse gas-neutral administrations: Empowering professionals from public administrations to become role models of transformation

**TES Academy transformation companionship process,
starting 9th November 2023 at UBA in Dessau-Roßlau,
Germany**

Background

The aim of greenhouse gas-neutral administrations is not simply a matter of reducing administrations' direct greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions. Besides administrations' credibility and function as role model, it is also about the purchasing power of the public sector and practical experience with climate protection.¹ In order to receive more attention and to be applied more widely, the criteria and necessary steps forward to make administrations ghg-neutral should be advertised, shared, discussed and further developed.

While a lot of research and discussions take place to further develop methodological concepts, criteria and IT tools regarding ghg-neutrality, the necessity of change management and institutionalisation within administrations seems not sufficiently addressed. On the one hand, the management level has to support the goal of ghg-neutrality and to communicate it resolutely and credibly to employees, contractual partners and the general public. Yet on the other hand, it has to make decisions on climate targets, empower the operational level to achieve them and provide adequate personnel, equipment and budget to implement the necessary measures. Such kind of empowerment as well as networks of people in charge for these processes are not sufficiently developed to foster the role model of public administrations from the municipal and regional to the national, European and global level. Therefore, it is necessary to enable the professionals in charge to act jointly in a cross-organizational manner and to keep the process of administrations towards ghg-neutrality on track.

Inspired by experiences from recently provided trainings, conferences and network activities, the German Environment Agency (UBA) and its TES Academy are setting up a process to better understand the challenges of change management needed in administrations to achieve ghg-neutrality and to strengthen collaboration between engaged and responsible persons in different administrations across Europe.

¹ In 2021, UBA has published a guide "The path to greenhouse gas-neutral administration" with practically applicable recommendations for public authorities (link: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/publikationen/the-path-to-greenhouse-gas-neutral-administration>).

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The TES Academy is an in-house
research project at UBA (duration
2022 to 2024).

Approach of process – first steps

Analysing the challenge: First of all, transformation is always a challenge on different levels - from personal to interpersonal, from institutional to societal. The following guiding questions we want to explore in first exchange formats with a heterogeneous international group of participants from different administrations and beyond: Which actors are relevant in this field? What challenges do people in charge of ghg-neutrality in organisations meet and which hurdles do they need to overcome? Which approaches like better institutionalisation and networking can support their work effectively? To achieve this, how can the requirements for ghg-neutrality and the importance of the role model of public authorities get increased awareness and acceptance among decision-makers and within administrations?

Extending the scope for solutions: A number of goals would be conceivable to be specified and discussed during the process:

- ▶ Increased awareness of the role model of public authorities among their decision-makers;
- ▶ Application of best practice for ghg emission reductions and climate mitigation;
- ▶ Tools for empowering professionals to act as change makers within their institutions
- ▶ Network of experts and supporters to develop and apply solutions for ghg-neutrality on the organizational, the national, the European and the global level;
- ▶ Practical guidance, support and assistance for ghg emission reduction in public organizations.

Defining the way forward: In collaboration with representatives of different authorities and public administrations from local to international level we envisage contributing to the development of proposals how to empower professionals to master their tasks regarding ghg-neutrality. Our process should ideally lead to stronger and supportive networks as well as applicable instruments to make administrations ghg-neutral. Joint follow-up activities will ideally result from this mutual learning process.

Timeline: We start the process with smaller meetings of experts to further shape the potential needs in the field and gradually expand to other actors to discuss these and share first results. To strengthen personal and institutional potentials we will likely invite for a longer, 3-day workshop, early in 2024, where further steps will be developed jointly.

It is our aim as TES Academy to create transformative spaces for mutual learning, relating, and collaborating. We want to invite participants to meet and connect at eye level, dive into new perspectives, and let novel, integrative approaches emerge. We trust that bringing together people with such rich and diverse expertise constitutes a unique opportunity to develop something genuinely new that cannot fully be planned beforehand.

How do we work?

In line with the guiding principles of the TES Academy, the process built upon the following pillars:

Multiple perspectives on the environment and sustainability – We reflect complexity and diverse expertise among stakeholders.

From personal to systemic – We consider all levels of transformation.

Holistic learning – We integrate our bodies, emotions, senses, as well as our intellects.

From local to global – We link different scales of sustainability.

Mutual learning – We learn from each other and develop spaces for collaboration on eye level.