

## Cities moving towards more environmental justice

**In many German cities, environment-related health risks are concentrated in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In discussions on this issue, the term “environmental justice” is used to describe the concept of preventing and reducing the socio-spatial concentration of environmental health risks and ensuring fair access to environmental benefits. Since November 2015, three pilot municipalities have been testing key elements of a strategic approach towards greater environmental justice.**

### **Research-practice project with the pilot municipalities Kassel, Marburg and Munich**

In a research-practice project funded by the German Environment Agency (UBA) and conducted by the German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu), titled “Implementation of an integrated strategy for environmental justice – Pilot project in German municipalities”, policy recommendations on environmental justice that were developed in a previous project are being tested for their suitability in day-to-day municipal practice.

A nationwide call was launched in early 2016 to find cities with a population of over 50,000 willing to participate in the project as pilot municipality. Out of those that responded, **Kassel, Marburg and Munich** were chosen. Since April 2016, Difu has been supporting these three pilot municipalities in implementing key elements of the environmental justice approach developed. Up until summer 2017, the offices or departments responsible in these cities for environment/green spaces, urban development/urban planning, health, youth and social affairs will be jointly planning and carrying out a range of measures.



The project aims to tackle a problem that numerous studies have revealed: People with low socio-economic status are more likely to be affected by environmental problems like noise, air pollution and lack of open spaces for recreation, and this phenomenon frequently characterizes entire neighbourhoods. With the spatial concentration of environmentally related health problems in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the topic of environmental justice is increasingly attracting attention in Germany and elsewhere. However, municipalities often lack strategies geared to

preventing and reducing the socio-spatial concentration of environmental health risks and ensuring fair access to environmental benefits.

### **Challenges and research questions**

One task is to combine environmental, health and social data in order to identify areas subject to multiple stresses. Another challenge lies in establishing inter-sectional cooperation – to last even beyond the end of the project. The project is also exploring the question of how the environmental

justice approach can be integrated into overarching local-government goals and strategies. It will also test what forms of resident participation and cooperation between different actors can support the creation of more environmental justice.

### Expert support by interdisciplinary working group

A working group composed of scientists, association representatives and local-, state- and federal-government officials is supporting the project and advising the project team. The working group members represent the fields of environment, nature conservation, health and urban development.

### Outlook

The experience gained in the three pilot municipalities will be used to derive transferrable findings with regard to a systematic approach to implementing environmental justice in municipal policies and administration. This will result in the creation of a toolbox “Environmental justice at local level” containing implementation tips, good practice examples, information and tools, which local governments can use in their day-to-day work. At a stocktaking event in summer 2017, the project outcomes will be presented to interested municipalities and professionals.



### Further reading

- **Böhme C, Preuß T, Bunzel A et al. (2015): Environmental justice in urban areas – Development of practically oriented strategies and measures to reduce socially unequal distribution of environmental burdens (Final Report) Umwelt & Gesundheit 01/2015. Dessau-Roßlau. Umweltbundesamt. – Publication in German with English summary** [Kurzlink: <http://bit.ly/2dgPtg2>]

### Project flyer

- **Research-practice project “Implementation of an integrated strategy for environmental justice – Pilot project in German municipalities”** [Kurzlink: <http://bit.ly/2eworjN>]

### Websites

- **Research-practice project “Implementation of an integrated strategy for environmental justice – Pilot project in German municipalities” (UBA website)** [Kurzlink: <http://bit.ly/2eODrdO>]
- **Research-practice project “Implementation of an integrated strategy for environmental justice – Pilot project in German municipalities” (Difu website)** [Kurzlink: <http://bit.ly/2cUFwnp>]

### Imprint

Authors: Christiane Bunge (UBA, General Aspects of Environment and Health Section), Christa Böhme, Thomas Franke and Thomas Preuß (all three from Difu)  
Editor: Kerstin Gebuhr M.A., General Aspects of Environment and Health Section  
Publisher: German Environment Agency | Environmental Hygiene Department  
Office address: Corrensplatz 1, D - 14195 Berlin  
E-mail: [telegramm@uba.de](mailto:telegramm@uba.de) | Internet: [www.umweltbundesamt.de](http://www.umweltbundesamt.de)  
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