

# **Lutz Weischer, Germanwatch**

## **Research Summary for the Workshop on understanding and communicating the groundswell of climate actions, New York, April 16-17, 2015**

My research focuses on initiatives with the involvement of national governments ("climate clubs"/"frontrunner alliances").

### **Qualitative assessment/categorization of initiatives**

A few aspects of my past work with WRI (see L. Weischer, J. Morgan, and M. Patel, 'Climate clubs: Can small groups of countries make a big difference in addressing climate change?' 21:3 Review of European Community and International Environmental Law (2012), 177) would be relevant to the discussions at the workshop on how to analyse initiatives. We only considered initiatives with a relatively strong involvement of national government, so purely sub-national or non-state actor initiatives are not captured, but several multi-stakeholder initiatives are. We found that all existing initiatives we considered could be categorized as:

- dialogue forums, either political dialogues or technical dialogues
- implementation groups, either groups working on national-level strategies and on projects.

We did not find any existing initiatives that would have fit our definition of a transformational club. In many forums, the incentives are too weak to turn the more ambitious ideas contained in declarations and actions plans into real action. That work also considered a number of aspects that could be interesting to track when analysing initiatives trying to identify the more effective ones, including vision/purpose, structure/institutions and funding.

My current work at Germanwatch focuses on two aspects:

### **The potential for transformational clubs on renewable energy**

I have contributed to a working paper led by colleagues at the World Resources Institute (Cynthia Elliott and others) that analyses options for more ambitious collaboration on renewable energy that could take place in existing organizations and partnerships (REN21, IRENA etc.) and/or in newly founded initiatives. The main part of the paper discusses these options, but there is also a part analysing 20 existing initiatives on renewable energy. We assess them against a set of three qualitative criteria to determine if they have the potential to be "transformational". Not all initiatives need to be held to these high standards, of course, but criteria like these could help identify a subset of particularly bold and impactful initiatives:

1. An ambitious vision: Club members should come together around a vision that should be ambitious and concrete, going significantly beyond business as usual, to guide their action.
2. Clear conditions for membership: Club membership should be exclusive and open only to those that meet clear criteria consistent with the vision. Criteria could include the track record of potential members, their targets for the future, and the existence of strategies and policies. The criteria need to be specific and measurable.

3. Significant benefits provided to members: The club needs to offer strong incentives for joining so that participants will accept the ambitious conditions for membership. Therefore, the club has to create real benefits that should be attractive for all members and should not be available to those outside the club.

We found that no existing initiatives meet all three criteria- and only three (International Energy and Climate Initiative Energy +, SIDS Lighthouse Initiative , Africa Clean Energy Corridor)meet at least one of them.

In addition to this research, I have also been taking part in discussions with experts and government officials from several countries on opportunities for starting such an ambitious, potentially even transformational, renewable energy club. I have also begun writing a short piece on lessons learned from the attempt by the German government to start a renewable energy club in 2012 that was subsequently abandoned.

### **Linking initiatives and the UNFCCC**

We have begun drafting a research paper that we will publish in the fall on linking initiatives and the UNFCCC. The paper will discuss several aspects of this theme. One central idea that is likely to be relevant to the discussions at the workshop is that initiatives should only be officially recognized by the UNFCCC if they fulfil certain criteria, including being able to provide estimates of their climate benefit. We are also currently thinking about several options how tracking and follow-up could be organized. Related to this, I have also taken the lead in drafting the CAN International position paper on the future of workstream 2, which could be developed into an ambition mechanism.