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Filling the SDG void in Braunschweig/Germany



Susanne Hauswaldt from the Community Foundation Braunschweig in Germany describes below how she became convinced of the need to embrace the SDGs, and on realising that no-one else was taking a lead, how the community foundation has taken on this role.

'I had my first personal encounter with the topic "SDGs" at a CSR conference in spring 2016 in Berlin. On the agenda was a presentation on the SDGs by the HR manager of SAP Germany. Neither the three letters nor their meaning told me anything, so I chose a parallel event on a different topic. Thankfully I met the SDGs again in the autumn of the same year, when this very lecture was offered again at our Corporate Volunteering Network Meeting. I could say it is since then that I have embraced the SDGs and come to realise how we can spread this topic in our communities and organisations.

I had the idea to put the SDGs on the agenda in April 2017 as the main presentation at the start of our Corporate Volunteering Action Day. However, I did not succeed in getting the preparatory group enthusiastic about the topic. They did not see the link between our local work and the UN goals. Later that year I enquired with the local administration who was the contact person for the SDGs. It was obvious that it was not clear what the letters meant and that there was no central contact person.

In 2018, the Bürgerstiftung Braunschweig (Braunschweig Community Foundation) discussed with the board whether we should publish a Braunschweig imPuls-Report (similar to the Vital Signs Report) and assign the SDGs to the selected topics. There remained little interest and appreciation of the relevance to the work of the foundation, however I wasn't to be deterred as I firmly believed that putting one's own actions into a global context, understanding that it takes all of us to achieve the goals, to make the goals our own, is the great challenge facing all those who are committed to the issue. A recurring presence of the theme seems inevitable to me here.

That persistence has paid off and we have decided that we will create the next encounter with the SDGs for the people in our city: our Braunschweig imPuls Report will be published for the first time in 2020 and we actively use it to place themes from our city within the framework and context of the SDGs. We explain the idea of the SDG's and show the connection between every citizen, their actions and the goals of the UN.

Now we have buy-in from the staff team and the board and have a mechanism, in our imPuls report, we can make the connection between local action and the SDGs, through the work of the foundation, and in broader discussions with other stakeholders around addressing needs in the city.'