

## Selected Issues of the Social-ecological Research Funding Programme

### Strategies for Coping with Systemic Risks

Hazards capable of triggering a self-reinforcing dynamic that can lead to crisis are called systemic risks. Such risks can arise from information and communications technologies, genetic technology or nanotechnology. In addition, isolated avoidance strategies often bring on subsequent risks in other systems. Keeping the precautionary principle and current uncertainties about the soundness of available knowledge in mind, projects under the Social-ecological Research funding programme develop exemplary measures for analysing and dealing with systemic risks.

### From Knowledge to Action – Paths towards Sustainable Consumption

Despite extensive knowledge about the need for sustainable consumption patterns and a broad range of measures in the area of consumer education, efforts to prompt a general trend towards sustainable consumption have not been very successful to date. The Social-ecological Research funding programme wants to identify obstacles that stand in the way of translating knowledge into changes in consumer behaviour, and offer new strategies for overcoming them. Starting points for this are the consumer's point of view and the individual's actions.



The Social-ecological Research funding programme is part of the Research for Sustainability (fona) framework programme of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

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Further information about this programme is available at:

<http://www.sozial-oekologische-forschung.org>

## The Social-ecological Research Funding Programme



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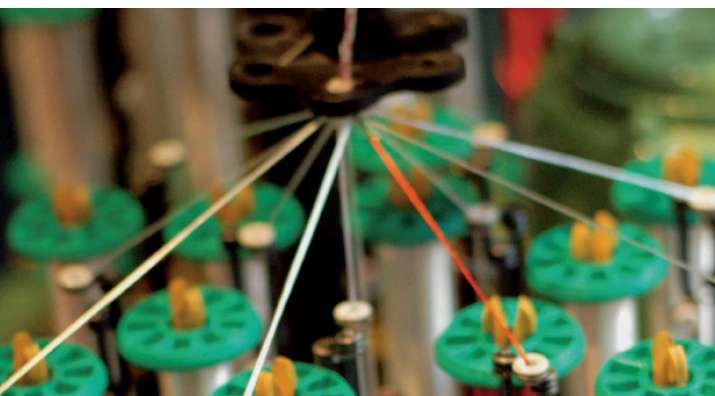


Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research



## The Challenge

What has to happen to induce consumers to actually apply what they know about sustainable consumption to their daily shopping habits? What risks are emerging as information and communications technology – in the form of global mobile telephone networks, for example – increasingly permeates day-to-day life? What strategies have to be developed in order to counter new risk dimensions being triggered by growing globalisation, societal mobility and interconnectedness?



The Social-ecological Research programme has been funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research since 2000. This programme has the task of finding answers to sustainability-related problems along the interface between society and the environment.

Accomplishing this requires interdisciplinarity – in other words, it requires collaboration between researchers from the social sciences and researchers from the natural sciences.

Further, dealing with lifeworld problems necessitates looking beyond the science system to the expertise that is to be found at the practical level (transdisciplinarity). To ensure this, societal stakeholders from various areas have to be incorporated into the research process. The aim of these activities is to steer the societal transformation process in the direction of sustainability.

## Capacity Building

Capacity building plays a major role because interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research content is not yet firmly anchored in the science system.

The fundamental aim of capacity building is to establish and integrate the social-ecological approach in research and teaching. The structural change that the university landscape is currently seeing (the launch of research facilities, an increase in the number of endowed chairs and research chairs, the development of scientific networks) has opened up opportunities for establishing social-ecological research at universities and pushing forward the meshing of the scientific-work being conducted at university and non-university research facilities.

Funding for junior researchers is a tool that gives young researchers the opportunity to earn an advanced degree by working on social-ecological research topics. This funding is provided for a period of five years so that the recipient can master the challenges entailed in incorporating a doctoral or postdoctoral thesis into interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research work.

Infrastructure funding is a capacity-building tool that targets independent research institutes that work in the area of social-ecological research and do not receive basic funding. The project-specific funding is granted in order to give such institutes an opportunity to secure their inter- and transdisciplinary (methodological) knowledge. Infrastructure funding also supports the creation of international networks.

## Accompanying Measures

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research conducts accompanying measures that contribute to quality assurance, the continued development of theory and methodology, results synthesis and the programme's presentation to the public. These measures include:

- Assistance in the form of a strategy advisory committee that provides its views on the principal objectives of the Social-ecological Research funding programme and on the underlying concepts of individual funding measures. It also issues recommendations regarding quality assurance and quality development.
- Evaluation of the Social-ecological Research funding programme by a panel of independent experts.
- Public presentation of the programme by the Science and Society Coordination Office with the aim of making its findings more widely known and fostering their implementation.

