



Growth, Prosperity, Climate Protection – We Can Have All Three!

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Climate change is a global challenge. The IPCC reports paint an unsettling picture of the grave impacts of climate change. Rising temperatures and altered precipitation patterns will lead to the desertification of vast areas, and sea levels will rise considerably in the coastal regions of our planet. Additionally, the number of extreme weather conditions is increasing. This will lead to fights for both water and land on a scale unprecedented in modern times.

Why Climate Protection?

Seen in the light of its impacts, climate change is also a regional challenge. The state of Baden-Württemberg in southwest Germany is one of the most severely affected regions in the country. In the past fifty years, the average annual temperatures have risen by up to 1.5 degrees Celsius. There are ever longer hot spells, followed by increased precipitation in autumn and winter, accompanied by severe storms including hurricanes, torrential rain, floods, hailstorms, and landslides. They all have significant impacts on many different spheres. Agriculture is threatened with crop failures and new pests. Forests and tree populations are suffering. Many natural species are at risk due to the strain of adjusting to changing living conditions. Intense heat is a problem for people working outdoors and for senior citizens in particular. New pathogens are finding their way into the country and health conditions are deteriorating. Hot summers can cause energy shortages because the rivers do not always provide enough water to be extracted for cooling purposes.

Germany recognizes that climate change is to a certain extent man-made. Industrialization, uninterrupted energy supply, and cross-border mobility of people all lead to an extensive consumption of energy. This entails greenhouse gas emissions that are harmful to our climate, especially CO₂. Western countries contribute to global warming with their emissions and increasingly, newly emerging industrial states do as well. Projections by well-known economic institutes indicate that the costs for climate-related damages will amount to almost 130 billion Euros by 2050 for Baden-Württemberg alone.

Baden-Württemberg has therefore adopted a pro-active climate policy: Further climate change needs to be prevented, not least in order to keep further financial damage at bay. Additionally, the alteration that has already happened in our climate needs to be addressed and adjustment measures need to be taken, one example being enhanced flood control systems.

Growth, Prosperity, Climate Protection – a Contradiction in Terms?

Baden-Württemberg's population continues to grow; population figures have increased by two-thirds in the past fifty years. There has been sustained growth in income levels and prosperity across the board over a long period of time. The majority of the population lives comfortably and is still able to save for harder times. Our highly productive companies are the backbone of our prosperity. Baden-Württemberg stands for high-quality and innovative products used around the globe. Due to continuous economic growth, energy consumption has increased steadily. However, over the past few years, despite increased economic productivity, energy consumption has fallen. In contrast to how it used to be, emissions of harmful greenhouse gases and CO₂ have been falling and are now decoupled from economic development. This tendency can be observed throughout the European Union.

In our opinion this stems from our climate protection efforts, because we have introduced various successful measures. In Baden-Württemberg, we focus on efficient energy use and the potential to save energy, both for private households and the public sector. We aim to increase energy efficiency by 2 percent per year. Heat insulation in buildings is an example for significantly improving efficiency. We have also identified other potential energy-saving methods, such as implementing more energy efficient electrical equipment and improving the transport sector.

At the same time, we rely on developing the use of renewable energy in all sectors: power generation, heat supply, and mobility. Renewable energy sources such as water, solar energy, biomass, and geothermal energy are freely available domestic energy sources. Unlike fossil fuels, they do not need to be transported from abroad over long distances and at great cost to Baden-Württemberg. Expanding the use of renewable energy will help us reach our goal of developing an energy supply that does not contribute to climate change and also helps with the classical objectives of supply guarantee and profitability. In Baden-Württemberg, renewable energy has leapt from being a research subject to large-scale production and is used extensively in companies and households. Renewable energy is used more and more intensely and is becoming more and more profitable. A new energy market has emerged and many companies and service providers benefit from it. Energy-related measures create jobs in addition to high-quality products and services, and generate value in and for Baden-Württemberg. For some time now, renewable energies have proved to be indispensable job generators in Germany. In 2008, producers of photovoltaic systems alone had a turnover of 5.7 billion Euros and 250,000 people were employed in the renewable energy sector in Germany. Furthermore, we also believe there is great potential to export technology and know-how. Promoting insulation for building facades and establishing legal provisions for such insulation have enabled German producers to become global market leaders.

Baden-Württemberg's regional government is convinced that growth, prosperity, and climate protection are all compatible and not contradictory. Climate protection contributes to growth and prosperity rather than slowing down economic growth.

Future Climate Policy in Baden-Württemberg – What Next?

Our climate policy will continue to rely on diversity. We must adjust to the inevitable impacts of climate change. Most of all, however, we need to stop climate change altogether or at least slow it down. Our climate protection programs aim to significantly reduce emissions of harmful greenhouse gases, including CO₂. Baden-Württemberg counts on various options and uses the full scope of state action, ranging from legislation, funding, and outreach and information campaigns right through to incentives for education and research.

One crucial factor will be public acceptance of the need for climate protection. In this regard, the steps taken by the state attempt to make a range of options available to the general public, which they need to accept and implement as much as they can. We are guided by the slogan: Climate protection is everybody's business!

Considering the challenges imposed by climate change and the finite nature of fossil energy sources, our efforts are certainly worthwhile. Baden-Württemberg will be more independent and there will be ongoing growth and prosperity in our region. Climate protection can be a driving force for growth and prosperity rather than an obstacle.

We hope that this opinion will gain ground across the globe. We need to achieve the 2 degrees Celsius goal for global warming. We expect the UN Climate Change Conference, COP 15, to be held in Copenhagen in December, to adopt a binding international agreement – for the benefit of mankind and the environment, and above all for future generations.

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