

## How to properly start energy-savings projects

### Inform

It is very important that all parties involved have access to relevant information. Since everyone who uses the school is involved in some manner (conscious behaviour), everyone needs to be informed. A tried and tested way of achieving this is to start with a smaller strategy meeting with the school director, the caretaker, and those teachers and pupils who are especially interested in this topic. Use this meeting to discuss plans of action. Once the project has been agreed upon, the next step is to determine which person or group will assume responsibility for it. This information must also be communicated to other people who use the school.

The formation of an energy-saving team is a perfect solution for carrying out these tasks. This team should encompass teachers, pupils, the caretaker, and, ideally, the school director(s). The teaching staff can be informed of the goals and content of the project in the scope of a teacher's workshop. It can be very effective to invite independent experts (from the responsible city office or energy advisors). In any event, the school director(s) must demonstrate that they support the project. The student council is a similar forum for the pupils. The class representatives can be informed of the project in a student council meeting. In primary schools or schools without a student council, the teachers can explain the energy-saving project to their classes.

### Decide

The entire teaching staff should not only be informed, but also be actively behind the energy-saving project. This provides enough support for the energy-saving team when the project is implemented. In other words, the execution of the project should be formally approved of by the teaching staff. Many school districts or financial sponsors require approval of the teaching staff for the school to receive the benefits of the success of the project. This approval should also include the official appointment of the energy-saving team. This saves work later.

### Examine

Where are the correct starting points for saving energy? Everyone who uses a school has most likely noticed weak areas in the building where improvements could be made. However, a complete overview can only be reached by going through the school. Check everything from the boiler room, the corridors, classrooms and special rooms for technical courses, as well as the gym and other rooms for "energy leaks". Do not forget to think about rooms where activities to raise awareness can be planned.

### Plan

Before starting, use the results from going through the school to carefully develop a plan. Hasty actions, such as secretly changing the heat settings, can be detrimental for the acceptance of the project. In order to make the efforts of the energy saving team more understandable, start with

sending technical information to everyone who uses the school. This may include, for example, information on climate protection, energy consumption, and conservation measures. Regular E-team meetings are also important in this planning phase. After the initial preparation, a public relations activity, such as an energy saving day or week, an exhibition, or even an energy saving competition can be planned and executed.

## Act

Markings on the thermostat valves and notes on the windows help increase the awareness of energy usage for everyone in the school. The energy saving team must be careful to encourage correct behaviour without forcing it. Activities that give the pupils and teachers the impression that they are being forced to give something up can be very problematic. Remember the following during energy saving projects: "No one needs to freeze or sit in the dark".

## Monitor

The energy saving team should get feedback during the initial activities. On one hand, it is important how well the actions are accepted by the other pupils and teachers, on the other hand, it is interesting to know whether savings were achieved. The second point is a long-term goal. Do not expect dramatic reductions in consumption at the start of the project. However, it is important to keep an eye on consumption levels to be able to detect middle and long-term tendencies. Presenting the work involved, for example in project documentation, is an important criterion for the general acceptance of the project. Remember: "Do good work and talk about it".