

Cooperation for the Climate

Seven cultural institutions of national significance, members of the Conference of National Cultural Institutions (KNK), conclude their climate cooperation project

Weimar, 13 August 2024

The pilot project "Climate Footprints for the Conference of National Cultural Institutions", made possible with generous funding from the German Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM), has now concluded.

Seven institutions of the Conference of National Cultural Institutions (KNK) calculated their respective carbon footprints for the first time in accordance with the nationwide KBK and KBK+ standards, adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) on 11 October 2023. The project's participants included the Museum Grassi Leipzig, Dessau-Wörlitz Cultural Foundation, the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, the Luther Memorials Foundation in Saxony-Anhalt, the Stiftung Schloss Friedenstein Gotha, the Wartburg Castle Foundation and the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg (SPSG). The SPSG was responsible for overseeing the project. The calculations themselves were carried out by an external service provider, the Berlin-based company Thema 1.

Both the scope and results of the project are highly relevant for the German cultural sector.

Extensive research efforts were required to adopt the higher CO₂ standards and include a large number of institutions which had little to no prior experience with emissions analyses. Although the project has concluded, there is still much remaining work to be done, as the relevant data is not yet available in the necessary form. To ensure long-term monitoring, increased staffing at the participating cultural institutions is absolutely necessary.

In June 2024 the KNK's carbon footprinting project was presented for the first time at the Green Culture Festival in Park Sanssouci. Over 1,000 cultural, political, administrative, scientific and civil representatives (including Steffi Lemke, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, Klara Geywitz, Federal Minister for Housing, Urban Development and Building, and Claudia Roth, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media) convened for two days in Park Sanssouci to discuss ideas and potential solutions for advancing environmental transformation in the cultural sector. In addition to environmental sustainability, the forum also focused on questions of social sustainability.

Efforts are now underway to continue engaging in active dialogue with the other KNK members. This includes discussing the results and "lessons learned" in detail and developing corresponding measures within the KNK organisation at its regularly scheduled, upcoming meetings. In this way, the KNK is taking steps to ensure the necessary knowledge transfer of scalable results from one of its projects and to prove the effectiveness of its newly introduced annual concept workshops to configure socially relevant projects – all in accordance with its Strategy Process 2022/23.

KNK spokesman Prof Dr Christoph Martin Vogtherr summed up the initial and important impact of the carbon footprinting project for his organisation as follows: "The example of the Prussian

Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg shows that we can only directly influence about four percent of our – expanded – CO₂ footprint. We can only gradually influence the carbon footprint of our national and international guests with respect to travelling to our museums. Our own measures have to be embedded in a climate-friendly transportation policy.”

KNK spokeswoman Dr Ulrike Lorenz of the Klassik Stiftung Weimar thanked the project team headed by Mathias Büge (SPSG) and added: “The CO₂ cultural standard facilitates the direct comparison of climate footprints of cultural organisations for the first time. This marks a major step in the transformation process so that we can honestly assess consumption and develop new measures. I appreciate the project’s reputation as it makes it all the easier for the institutions of the KNK to adopt it. There is a tremendous amount we can learn from it. Based on the energy and resource consumption calculations and mobility emissions, we will be able to define measures that further reduce our carbon footprint.”

The Conference of National Cultural Institutions (KNK) is an interest group of 23 nationally significant cultural institutions of varying size and orientation in the eastern German states, each of which are represented by their respective directors. Its unique character is rooted in the heterogeneity of its participating member institutions and their diverse, interdisciplinary scope of competence. The KNK has developed and carried out a number of pioneering projects, such as “Audience Development” and “Perspectives of Eastern German Collections”, as well as the SILK Cultural Asset Protection Guidelines on catastrophe prevention and the security of cultural assets.

The KNK serves as a platform for engaging in dialogue and programmatic discussion and for communicating common interests and goals to political decisionmakers. In autumn 2021, the KNK tasked its newly elected spokespersons, Dr Ulrike Lorenz, president of the Klassik Stiftung Weimar and Prof Dr Christoph Martin Vogtherr, general director of the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg, to set a transformation process in motion to create a pan-German platform of German cultural institutions of excellence based on a jointly defined strategy in order to safeguard the viability and societal relevance of the KNK for years to come.

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