

# Building a Global Structure for Corporate Sustainability: The Allianz Case

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Sustainability is a global concept and a global aim. Therefore multinational companies would seem to be in a good position to support and foster sustainability across national borders. However, in most cases multinational organisations rarely venture beyond an abstract concept of sustainability. Corporate membership in the Global Compact or a CEO statement on the pursuit of sustainable goals often remain the only global commitment, a commitment which is, however, not reflected in the structure of the organisation.

The moment multinationals try to make sustainability operational, they are faced with economic, social and cultural differences. These are reflected in the individual issues of corporate governance, risk management, ecology, HR management etc. Of course, corporate culture as a whole is also affected to an extent by the national background and culture of the individual country. Hence a multinational will soon be obliged to consider how global or how local a sustainability strategy can be or must be.

The Allianz Group is one of the world's largest financial services provider operating with a rather heterogeneous company portfolio of traditional as well as newly founded companies all over the world. The presentation will use the case of the Allianz Group to describe how multinationals draw the thin line between a global strategy for sustainable development and the consideration of local necessities, opportunities and restrictions.

This will also examine the steps on the organisational level which have to be taken to make sustainability really penetrate the company. More often than not companies shy away from this effort, limit themselves to just a few selected projects and do not venture in an operational global sustainability strategy.

The presentation of the structure and the organisation of Allianz Group in terms of sustainability will be enriched by the results of a survey conducted in six Allianz Group companies in Germany, France, the UK, Italy, Poland and China. Based on the premise that the implementation of sustainability is carried out by individuals working for a company, this survey investigated staff attitudes to sustainability to gather input for the definition of a global strategy. Employees on all hierarchical levels were interviewed in a qualitative survey aimed at evaluating the feasibility of a sustainability strategy against the social and cultural backgrounds of staff. Practical examples will illustrate which issues have to be taken into consideration when discussing the extent of global versus local sustainability strategies.

## Curriculum Vitae

Martina Wegner is a researcher at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany. She holds a degree in philosophy focussing on business ethics and sustainability issues. Her research projects include a two-year 6-country comparative study on corporate sustainability for Allianz Group, the results of which were presented on several international conferences and led to a PhD thesis.

For Bertelsmann Foundation she recently co-authored with André Habisch an investigation into the legal aspects of CSR in Germany. She is one of the editors of the forthcoming publication "CSR Across Europe" which presents twenty-three national perspectives on CSR as well as Pan-European contributions.

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She is a research fellow at the Center for Corporate Citizenship and teaches Business Ethics and Sustainability Management at several universities. Her consulting work for various companies refers to the fields of business ethics, CSR and sustainability.

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