

## Business, Technology & the Environment

### Interview with Baden-Württemberg Environment Minister Tanja Gönner



*Gönner speaking in Washington,  
Photo: Cable Risdon*

Baden-Württemberg's Environment Minister Tanja Gönner has been busy keeping her state at the forefront of climate protection, renewable energy and energy efficiency in Germany. Her latest initiative, a bill which will make the use of renewable energies in residential buildings (20 percent in new buildings, 10 percent in existing buildings) mandatory, puts the state at the vanguard of energy efficiency policy in Germany. We spoke with Minister Gönner during her recent visit to the United States, where she met with regional and national leaders and spoke at the Energy Efficiency Global Forum and Exposition.

**You just returned from a trip to Canada and Chicago during which you met with regional and municipal leaders to discuss environmental issues. What possibilities do you see for cooperation between Germany and other countries at the state and local level?**

Technology is one very important area. In Chicago, we visited a company that has developed a new technology that makes it possible to capture CO<sub>2</sub> that would have been released into the atmosphere by burning coal in pure oxygen. Carbon capture and storage is something that has been discussed a great deal in Germany, and work has begun on an experimental power plant in Brandenburg that will use a similar “oxyfuel” technology to produce electricity without releasing any CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere.

We have also noted with interest that many of the states are interested in the EU emissions trading market. I think that emissions trading could contribute immensely to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, but it should be a worldwide system. The EU emissions market has been in place since 2005, so we already have a great deal of knowledge from this experience on how to improve the system. Now, we can also involve US partners in the dialogue on how to improve and expand the system.

**What does Baden-Württemberg do to help Germany meet its environmental targets?**

In Baden-Württemberg, we try to strike a balance between using regulations and incentives to protect the environment. Just last week, we enacted a law that will significantly reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from buildings. The law requires new residential buildings to derive 20 percent of the energy used for heating from renewable sources such as geothermal or solar. As of 2010, older buildings will have to derive 10 percent of the energy used for heating once they replace their heating systems. The Renewable Heating Act enables Baden-Württemberg to play a key role in Germany.

The other side of the coin is incentives. In 2002, we introduced a program called “Climate Protection Plus” that helps small to mid-sized businesses and other institutions, especially municipalities, increase energy efficiency and reduce emissions. We provide advice and support on how to reduce emissions by renovating buildings, using renewable energy or adjusting their

processes. Then, we support their investments with grants. Since 2002, we have provided 40 million euro in assistance to augment 265 million euro of investment in energy saving technologies.

**In Washington, you are meeting with members of Congress and representatives of the EPA as well as speaking at the Energy Efficiency Global Forum and Exposition. What message do you want to convey to your partners here?**

I want to show what can be done in a state like Baden-Württemberg - that it is possible to strike a good balance between ecological and economical considerations. In fact, supporting the development of green technology can have a significant positive economic impact.

I also want to show that regulatory targets can promote the growth of green technologies. I think that the discussion in the US often tends to focus on technological solutions and you often hear “we do not want regulation.” However, our experience has been that - besides our providing incentives and grants - these technologies often develop in direct response to regulations that help create a demand for them.

I also want to get a feeling for the current discussion about climate change and emissions trading. The US did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, but now we are in discussions for post Kyoto, and it is critical that this process includes the US. We will only be able to get the developing nations like India and China on board if the US signs on as well.