

Sustainable Utility Partnerships 4.0 - Innovationsforum Mittelstand - KMU - BMBF - Capacity Development - Augmented Reality - Water 4.0 - E-Learning - German Water Partnership

Innovation Forum for SMEs: Sustainable Utility Partnerships 4.0

Within the framework of bilateral cooperation, the German government provides around 550 million euros annually for projects in the areas of water, wastewater and waste disposal in developing countries. However, at the end of many projects, operation and maintenance by local operators are often poor and, in the worst case, operation of the utilities must be stopped completely. At the same time, various reasons have hindered German operators from engaging in international long-term efforts and using their extensive specialist knowledge effectively. In addition to an unclear legal framework, this includes, above all, difficulties in seconding employees to foreign companies for longer assignments.

Becoming and remaining more able to act internationally

The Innovation Forum "Sustainable Utility Partnerships 4.0" wants to take up this problem and examine the potential of digital technologies for their solution. Representatives from the water and wastewater sector, the technology sector, science, education and international cooperation are invited to get involved in the project, at the concluding symposium and in the network establishment. The overriding objective is to develop new products, services, educational formats and business models that will enable German SMEs to distinguish themselves internationally and at the same time make infrastructure projects more sustainable.

Digitisation as an opportunity for international partnerships

Digitisation and Water 4.0 open up new possibilities for cooperation between German and foreign operators. The possible applications of modern information and communication technologies range from initial and advanced training courses to the remote operation of water management systems, e.g. through the use of e-learning tools, augmented and virtual reality, or smart maintenance. Many of these technologies already exist, new combinations and interfaces are now to be identified, gaps closed and diverse players brought together.

Innovation Forum for the concretisation of a roadmap

The results of various activities such as creative workshops and focus groups will be bundled and discussed in a two-day innovation forum in summer 2019. In addition to establishing a network, the aim here is also to concretise a roadmap for joint follow-up activities.

inter 3 leads the project and cooperates with German Water Partnership e.V. (GWP). The concept of the sustainable utility partnerships was developed mainly by the GWP working group "Operation and Education". The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the "Innovation Forums for SMEs" initiative. The funding initiative creates better conditions for medium-sized companies to develop their own innovation activities and new business models.

**Project name:**

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