

Webwatch

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EAWAG Aquatic Research

http://www.eawag.ch/index_EN

EAWAG is the German acronym for the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology. It was founded in 1936 and in 1998 it became a research and development institute, part of the Swiss Research System within the umbrella of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, ETH. Currently it is divided in two main locations and has around 400 people as active researchers employed.

From its initial goal of performing research in waste water treatment, EAWAG activities have broaden and now include all types of aquatic systems, urban water systems, wastewater treatment, effects of chemical compounds on the environment, methodologies to reduce their impact, among others. Presently EAWAG is divided in twelve departments, in areas that range from the fundamental sciences, for example “Aquatic Ecology” and “Environmental Chemistry”, to more applied and engineering focused areas such as “Process Engineering” and “Urban Water Management”. This ensures that all areas of activity relevant to aquatic systems and related activities are taken into account, allowing for a wide range of research topics, and increasing the potential for inter and/or trans-disciplinary research, which is actively promoted. EAWAG also has some education, consulting and knowledge transfer activities, to increase the institute visibility and allow the practical implementation of its activity results.

Thus, the EAWAG site serves many purposes. From an institutional perspective, it gives a description of the current background and history of the institute, what are its goals and funding, location and contact information. This and other information can be found in the “About us” tab in the top bar presented in all site webpages. In the “Research” section more information can be found on the various EAWAG departments, current research focus and initiatives. Links for each area are presented for those interested in knowing more of specific areas. There is also possible to access the publications and reports area, where many of the EAWAG research results are presented, some of them freely accessible. These publications are hosted in an exterior website where a dedicated search engine can be used. Other sections deal with educational and vocational training, as well as consulting and knowledge transfer.

While the site does a good job on presenting the activities of the research institute, its organization is somewhat confuse, and moving through the different parts of the site may be complicated, as the formatting is not uniform. Also, finding relevant information may be difficult, although a search facility exists at the site. Many links point to exterior sites, further complicating the site usage. Albeit the problems pointed out, the site has a lot of information relevant to people working in the various aspects of aquatic systems, as for example water treatment and supply, ecology, among others.

UN Global Compact

<http://www.unglobalcompact.org>

The UN Global Compact, also known as Compact or UNGC, is a United Nations initiative first announced at the

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World Economic Forum on January 31, 1999, by secretary general Kofi Anan, and officially created the next year. Currently this initiative is supported by six UN agencies, in particular those directly involved in development, and environmental and social issues, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Currently the UNGC is the largest world initiative in the area of corporate sustainability worldwide, with currently almost 10,000 participants from over 130 countries.

The main aim of this initiative is to promote and persuade business on a global scale to adopt practices that take into account sustainability and their social responsibilities, develop and implement policies and strategies with those principles in mind, and to report on the results of their implementation to all relevant stakeholders. That way, business will be able to show the markets and other stakeholders their commitment, and even benefits from new business opportunities.

The UNGC is not either a mandatory or regulatory initiative, but instead it is a framework based on ten principles that cover the areas of human rights, labor standards, the environment, and anti-corruption issues. Companies or other organizations can participate or implement measures based on the UNGC on a voluntary basis, with assistance from the supporting UN agencies. This initiative can also serve as a forum and a network for discussion and communication between stakeholders in areas encompassed by the UNGC. However, no certification or recognition process or activities are pursued by the Compact on whether the participant organizations are following or implementing policies according to the ten principles, and to which extent.

The website serves mainly the purposes of presenting the UN Global Compact, what it is, what are the ten principles, how it can be implemented in practice and how organizations can be helped in the process, among other relevant issues. In the "About" section a very comprehensive description of what is the UNGC, of the ten principles, how the initiative operates and other relevant aspects of its governance and operation can be found. Special focus is given to the advantages of participating in the initiative from a sustainability point of view. The questions related with the participation of business or non-business organizations, how to engage and apply are dealt with the "How to participate" section. To those interested in how to report progress according to the type of organization and stakeholders involved, to analyze the results, and even to get training on it, relevant information can be found in the "Progress & information" tab. Other sections deal with the stakeholders relevant to this initiative, with a comprehensive list of participants, local networks, organizations, and stakeholders engaged in the UNGC activities, with a listing of events and news, among others.

The website does a good job presenting the UNGC, its guiding principles and how to participate. It is easy to navigate, although a lot of information and text is given in some pages. A search facility is valuable in finding the information in which one is interested, as most of it is only available as written text in the website pages. Some of the most important pages are available in languages other than English, with the goal of reaching a wider audience. This is pertinent as the site deals with a very important initiative, both at present and increasingly in the future.

Ecologic Institute

<http://ecologic.eu>

The Ecologic Institute (EI) is a private not for profit international organization that is a global think tank for the promotion and/or development of environmental related research policy analysis, and consultancy for both governmental and private organizations. It was founded in 1995 in Berlin. During the years and to extend the reach of its own activities the institute has opened other offices in Europe (in Berlin, Brussels, and Vienna), and in the United States in 2008 (in Washington DC and San Mateo, California).

The main goal of this organization is the development and implementation of new ideas and/or strategies to deal with existing or future problems in the areas of environmental management and sustainable development. The main focus is to generate practical and real world results at various scales of action, from international to local and company levels, for the development of policies and strategies to tackle environmental problems and other practical questions. In its activities the EI tries to cover all the potential areas of interest to existing or potential environmental problems, as for example management of renewable resources, impact of specific developments or of tax policies, among others. Thus, there is a wide variety of different activities either promoted or sponsored by the EI, including but not limited to training courses, joint research projects with industry, academia and other organizations, consultancy for governmental and/or private organizations, among others.

The website aims to present the main activities of EI in its various areas. As the European and North American activities are different the site is divided in two main areas, directly accessible from the menu in the left side of the main page. The two parts are different although share many similarities in their structure. In each one it is possible to find a small history of each branch, and a listing of people directly engaged in the institute by area of activity, including a small biography, interests and main results of their

activities, along with contact details. Also, a list of projects, ongoing programs (only for the North American part), presentations and publications can also be found for each of the EI chapters. Each link goes to a specific page where more information and materials related with the EI's projects and/or activities with the contacts can be found. Each chapter also contains a donation link, to those interested in supporting the Institute activities.

The menu on the right side includes links to common areas of the site. There one can find a multimedia presentation of EI aimed to people interested in knowing what are the institute's main goals, areas of expertise and some of the past and of the ongoing projects. Some sections discuss the activities of EI with partners from both sides of the Atlantic, while other discuss the legal aspects of the environment and how the activities of EI can improve the legal framework in its main geographical areas of activity. A newsletter presenting the activities of EI and its main results can also be accessed at the site, where it is possible to subscribe it for free.

The site has a very bright and appealing presentation, and each main topic that can be accessed from the main webpage. Most of materials available at the site are written in English language, ensuring that they reach a wider audience. The search facility is very handy as the site has a lot of material in various areas, making it an essential site for everybody working directly or indirectly in the environmental area.

IEA-Renewable Energy Technology Deployment

<http://iea-retd.org/>

The IEA Renewable Energy Technology Deployment (RETD) is one of the 41 international technology collaborative efforts currently being undertaken by the International Energy Agency, IE. It was started in September 15, 2005, by five members of IEA, and currently its members include Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom. In practice, this collaborative effort is an agreement between the various members focused on the development and practical implementation of renewable energy systems, and its use in several economic sectors.

The main objective of IEA-RETD is the promotion of the renewable energy benefits to increase its share in the overall market, according to existing international and/or national policies for energy or directly related subjects. To ensure this IEA-RETD provides a forum where policy makers, energy producers, industrialists and other relevant stakeholders can discuss and develop solutions and/or strategies to address the many questions linked to the development and implementation of renewable energy systems. All forms of renewable

energy are considered by the IEA-RETD activities, taking into account all relevant aspects in a sustainable development perspective, including production, integration in existing energy systems and energy mix, economic and environmental considerations, among others. A wide variety of activities are promoted and/or sponsored under this collaborative agreement umbrella. This includes the support and participation in projects with specific goals, organization or participation in international events aimed to foster and speed-up the deployment of renewable energy systems, demonstration projects, among others.

The website of IEA-RETD serves mainly as a platform to present the collaborative agreement, in particular who are its members, and what are its main past and current activities, and results. Thus, in the "About RETD" link it is possible to find information on what is IEA-RETD, what are its main goals and areas of activities, people in charge and activity reports. Under the "Publications" bottom it is possible to find reports and other publications that represent most of the results obtained in this collaborative agreement. Most of them are freely available and are classified by themes, including for example sections for the benefits of renewable energy, key challenges and opportunities, financing renewable energy, application of renewable energy system in specific areas such as in the transportation sector, among others. In the "Ongoing" section descriptions of the current projects are presented, with a complete presentation of the main goals and expected deliverables. For people interested in participating in events or projects of IEA-RETD the "Tenders" and "Events" sections have all the relevant information, in the last case with links to the presentations and other material whenever possible.

The site has a simple and clear presentation, and it is easy to navigate and to find many interesting pieces of information concerning renewable energy. As this field is showing a tremendous development, and the many ongoing projects of IEA-RETD, it is possible to have e-mail updates of new tenders and publications, and it is possible to follow in twitter its activities. In overall the site has very relevant information in many aspects of renewable energy systems that may be valuable in related areas, as for example renewable resources deployment.

Final Words

We will return on the next issue with a fresh selection of sites. If you know of sites that are worthy of being presented, send us all relevant information to the following e-mail address: amartins@fe.up.pt. Any suggestions will be considered with great attention for possible publication. In that case the contributors names will be acknowledge in this column. Surf well.