



Engineers of optimism: Audi Environmental Foundation looks back on 15 years of engagement

- Highlights and research results from the Foundation's funding projects at "Let's Talk Greenovation" night
- Harald Lesch, professor of astrophysics, and time expert Jonas Geissler join the Environmental Foundation's project partners to discuss our use of natural resources and how long it will take the Earth to regenerate
- Rüdiger Recknagel, Director of the Audi Environmental Foundation: "Environmental protection is a race against time"

Ingolstadt, October 23, 2024 – The Audi Environmental Foundation defines "greenovation" as innovative technologies that either contribute directly to environmental protection or make an existing practice from the fields of research and the economy more environmentally friendly than before. Since 2009, the Foundation has initiated scientific and technical projects for a livable environment, conducted environmental education, and motivated people of every age to take action to protect our natural resources. At an evening of discussion with renowned astrophysicist Harald Lesch and time researcher Jonas Geissler, the Foundation looked back on its first 15 years of activity with around 300 guests at the Ingolstadt Cultural Center. Guests included Gerd Walker, Member of the Board of Management for Production and Logistics at AUDI AG and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Audi Environmental Foundation, and former ski racer Felix Neureuther, also a member of the Foundation's Board of Trustees.

"The results of human-driven climate change are well known, as is what we can do to slow the pace of climate change. We need to fundamentally rethink our understanding of the economy. Every individual can do their part. We want to encourage them do so and present innovations and topics that conserve our natural resources and make a positive contribution to a future worth living," says Rüdiger Recknagel, Director of the Audi Environmental Foundation. "Environmental protection is a race against time."

The Audi Environmental Foundation began its activities in 2009 with the [oak forest project](#). The 100-year research project, led by the Technical University of Munich, investigates how oaks must be planted to achieve the greatest possible CO₂ storage capacity. The Foundation financed the planting of a total of six oak forests near Audi production sites. These oaks, known to have a high storage capacity, were planted in concentric circles at varying distances and have been monitored ever since.

While the early years were characterized by smaller regional projects for the protection of species and biodiversity, the Audi Environmental Foundation has now expanded its commitment far beyond the borders of Bavaria and Germany.



For example, it collaborates with partners such as universities and nonprofit organizations worldwide dedicated to protecting the environment and researching technology-based solutions. The Audi Environmental Foundation has coined the term “greenovation” – from “green” and “innovation” – to describe the interplay between innovative technology and environmental protection.

One example is the [URBANFILTER](#). In this project, the Foundation worked with the Technical University of Berlin to develop state-of-the-art, intelligent filter modules for storm drains. These URBANFILTERS help prevent environmentally harmful substances like tire wear particles, cigarette butts, street cleaning waste, or the lids from coffee-to-go cups from being washed into sewers and bodies of water. Laboratory tests have shown that the filters are very effective, even in heavy rain.

Prodip Chatterjee, co-founder of the green startup Nunam, presented the successes of his research projects on second-life batteries. The collaboration, which began in 2019, took [discarded laptop batteries](#) and turned them into small power banks. By using discarded modules from electric Audi prototypes, larger second-life storage solutions became possible, and in late 2023, Nunam installed a second-life charging station and handed over two [electric rickshaws](#) to women in India to transport their goods to local markets. With this project, Nunam is enabling women to participate in the local economy while also gaining valuable insights into the aging and long-term durability of the charging capacity of used Audi test vehicle HV batteries. The data is made available as open-source data at [circularbattery.org](#).

The collaboration with Prodip Chatterjee began at the 2019 One Young World (OYW) Summit, where the Berliner-by-choice applied for a sponsorship, funded by the Audi Environmental Foundation, to participate in the forum, which addresses the pressing issues of the future.

Another collaboration that began with an OYW scholarship is the Foundation’s sponsorship of Litro de Luz Brasil with Audi do Brasil.

[Litro de Luz](#), the local branch of the global organization, provides portable lights to remote villages and communities, for example in the Amazon, that have no permanent access to electricity. The lights are made with small solar panels in plastic bottles. By enabling residents to walk home safely at night, read, and study, the lights allow them to participate in social and educational life. Litro de Luz Brasil trains village residents to make and repair their own lamps. In the latest project phase in the summer of 2024, 20 villages were provided with lights.

The Audi Environmental Foundation is also supporting a [biodiversity monitoring project](#) in South America, an eDNA (environmental DNA) project, which Wilderness International and scientists from the Environmental Robotics Lab at ETH Zurich are carrying out. The project uses drones as a completely new method of collecting eDNA, a fast, minimally invasive, and precise way to access unexplored regions and fill research gaps.



On the one hand, drones are a quick and relatively inexpensive way to collect information about biodiversity in protected areas. On the other hand, they provide an opportunity to test new technologies and compare the results with traditional approaches.

The Foundation also presents an annual Sustainable Resource Management Award to students at the Technical University of Munich, which began in 2017, and the THI Sustainability Award to students at the Technical University of Ingolstadt, which began in 2022.

Additionally, several projects for protecting biodiversity, including the [preservation of fens](#) and a [coastal renaturation project with Audi of America](#), are among the Foundation's funding projects. Once a month, from early spring to late fall, the Foundation organizes a plogging action, a combination of jogging and picking up litter. Under the motto "MACH MIT!" (English: Join in), AUDI AG employees can apply to sponsor an environmental project with a non-profit partner. The Foundation covers up to 75 percent of project costs, up to a maximum of 2,009 euros, which commemorates the year the Foundation was established. To date, 46 projects have been completed, including several wild bee walls, flower meadows, raised beds, and planting actions.

Furthermore, the Audi Environmental Foundation has published three non-fiction books: "Abenteuer – Leben, Natur und Technik" (English: Adventure – life, nature, and technology), "Die Erforschung der Bienenwelt" (English: Exploring the world of the bee), and "Greenovation".

The activity book can be ordered free of charge by emailing the Foundation at info@audi-stiftung-fuer-umwelt.de; please include a shipping address and your reasons for wanting the book.

More information about the Audi Environmental Foundation can be found [here](#).



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The Audi Environmental Foundation is an active supporter of research in new technologies and scientific methods for a livable future. Its declared aim is to help protect the environment and to create and promote opportunities for sustainable action. The foundation focuses in particular on the support and development of environmentally compatible technologies, on measures for environmental education, and on the protection of the natural resources for humans, animals, and plants. Established by AUDIAG in 2009 as a fully owned subsidiary, the foundation is a part of the company's social and environmental policy involvement.
