



Stichting Sailors for Sustainability

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Sailors for Sustainability One Year into Their Search for Sustainable Solutions

Dutchmen Floris van Hees (38) and Ivar Smits (42) are Sailors for Sustainability. One year ago they left Amsterdam aboard their classic sailing ship *Lucipara*² for a journey around the world in search of solutions to sustainability problems. Travelling on wind energy, they focus their search on various aspects that concern modern society and our planet, including energy, food, transportation, housing, climate and ecosystems.



Their mission: to demonstrate that a sustainable future is possible. With positive examples from around the world they aim to inspire as many people as possible. They hope that the solutions are applied on a large scale, leading to an accelerated transition to a sustainable society.

After their departure from the Netherlands they first sailed north. 'We knew that the Scandinavian countries lead in many areas when it comes to sustainable solutions. That's why we wanted to start our journey there', skipper Smits explains. 'Via the United Kingdom we then sailed south to Spain and Portugal'. Since the beginning of this year they have been exploring the Mediterranean. At this moment, one year into their trip, van Hees and Smits are in Italy.

Local Initiatives

Many of the solutions the sailors have found can be applied by anyone. Co-skipper van Hees: 'That's good news. It proves that everybody can do something, even without government taking the lead.' One of these low-threshold examples they found in Samsø, Denmark, where the island community organized its own sustainable energy revolution. And in Totnes, England, residents share vegetable gardens, together make their homes more energy efficient and stimulate the local economy. In Findhorn, Scotland, the sailors visited an ecovillage. The community lives in ecohomes and shares tools and cars. 'We describe the solutions in articles and videos and give tips on how everyone can get involved,' Smits adds.

Inspiring People

Often, charismatic individuals play a leading role. For example, Helena von Bothmer and her husband Stefan have set up a vegetable garden and restaurant. By applying permaculture they succeed in creating a fertile soil on a rocky Swedish island. It enables them to cultivate fruit and vegetables. In England, van Hees and Smits met *Earth Lawyer* Polly Higgins. She passionately lobbies for the criminalization of large-scale ecosystems destruction. Equally contagious is Chris Dews' commitment in Ibiza. From waste recycling, beach clean-ups, to local agriculture, Chris is the driving force behind local sustainability initiatives. His *Casita Verde* farm is a stellar example of ecotourism and education. The encounters with these individuals strengthen the sailors in their mission. 'Their positive energy is so overwhelming, it makes you want to get involved right away,' van Hees explains.

Government Stimulation

In Scandinavia, the sailors witnessed the important role that governments can play in promoting sustainability. Copenhagen has the ambitious goal of being CO₂ neutral by 2025. To achieve that, the city improves and expands its biking, walking and public transport infrastructure. At *Rockwool*, the world leader in stone wool insulation, van Hees and Smits learned that the Danish government also stimulates energy efficiency by setting stringent energy standards for new buildings. Neighbouring Norway is the world champion in electric driving thanks to government incentives. Smits is impressed by the progressive measures: 'It shows that national and local governments can be great stimuli for sustainability and sustainable enterprise.'

Opportunities for Innovative Companies

The sustainable solutions have in common that they provide opportunities for innovative companies that lead the transition to a sustainable society. In Kiel, van Hees and Smits visited *Unverpackt*, Germany's first packaging-free supermarket. This innovative retail format has since been copied in many other towns. And in Copenhagen construction and energy companies are working hard on the necessary infrastructure to realize the city's climate ambitions.

The sailors also found companies using proven technologies. *Fair Transport* carries freight by sailboat and thereby challenges the status quo in shipping. The organic wine producers they visited apply traditional methods to avoid using poison while growing grapes. At a *Slow Food* restaurant they tasted artisanal and local produce of the season. These types of companies put sustainability at the core of their business model and are making money. The sustainable solutions also create jobs, as the sailors saw at the organic community supported agriculture farm *Kattendorfer Hof* in Germany. Smits adds: 'Sustainable food production is often more labour-intensive than large-scale industrial agriculture.'

Collecting Pieces of a Puzzle

Van Hees: 'To see how many sustainable solutions are already working and how enthusiastic people are about them is very inspiring. It is as if we are gathering pieces for a great sustainability puzzle. When these are all put together, a sustainable future becomes clearly visible. Active citizens, a stimulating government and innovative companies are indispensable to complete the puzzle. Together they can scale up the sustainable solutions and realize a sustainable future.'

Publicity to Inspire

The Sailors for Sustainability blog and vlog about the solutions and their sailing adventures. On their own website and social media they use English, while their followers at home can read Dutch articles disseminated via corporate and media partners. This way, the sailors hope to reach and inspire as many people as possible. Furthermore, sponsor contributions from partners and contributions from crowdfunding platform [Patreon](#) help to fund the journey.

Smits summarizes their media objectives: 'We would like to maximize our audience, so we can generate attention for sustainable solutions that not only work, but also need to be implemented elsewhere, urgently.' They are open to more partnerships and *patrons* to achieve their goal.



Many years on the high seas

The sailors have visited twenty sustainable solutions so far. This year they will look for sustainable solutions in different countries around the Mediterranean, whereas in early 2018 they plan to cross the Atlantic to South America. The route then takes them to the Pacific, New Zealand, Australia and Asia. The whole world trip is expected to take several years.

Following and partnering

More information about their trip, the sustainable solutions and possibilities to partner with the Sailors for Sustainability can be found on their [website](#). The sailors can also be found on [Patreon](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

(Click on the pictures for the high-resolution version on sailorsforsustainability.nl)

 <p>Ivar Smits (l.) and Floris van Hees (r.) with Lucipara²</p>	 <p>Lucipara²</p>	 <p>Lucipara²</p>	 <p>Lucipara² in the Lysefjord (Norway)</p>
 <p>Ivar Smits (l.) and Floris van Hees (r.)</p>	 <p>Floris van Hees (l.) at Germany's first packaging-free grocery store</p>	 <p>Floris van Hees with Mathias von Mirndorf at community supported agriculture farm 'Kattendorfer Hof' (Germany)</p>	 <p>Renewable district heating plant on Samsø (Denmark)</p>
 <p>New pedestrian and cycling bridge in Copenhagen (Denmark)</p>	 <p>Floris van Hees at insulation company Rockwool (Denmark)</p>	 <p>Helena von Bothmer explains permaculture to Ivar Smits (r.) (Sweden)</p>	 <p>Ivar Smits with a Tesla on electric car ferry Ampere (Norway)</p>
 <p>Sustainable homes in <i>ecovillage</i> Findhorn (Scotland)</p>	 <p>Floris van Hees (r.) with <i>Earth Lawyer</i> Polly Higgins (England)</p>	 <p>Ivar Smits at a community garden in Totnes (England)</p>	 <p>Lucipara² next to Fair Transport's <i>Tres Hombres</i> in Porto (Portugal)</p>
 <p>Ivar Smits (l.) and Floris van Hees (r.) with Chris Dews (m.) of Greenheart Ibiza (Spain)</p>	 <p>Floris van Hees (l.) and Ivar Smits (r.) at organic wine maker Château Margüi (France)</p>	 <p>Floris van Hees at the Slow Food institute (Italy)</p>	 <p>Sailors for Sustainability logo</p>