

Study visit for Policy Makers and Community Energy Experts in Schleswig-Holstein

Enhancing Energy Communities in Rural Regions – Knowledge Exchange Between Schleswig-Holstein and Latvia

Date: 8-11 October 2024

Context of the Study Visit

The study visit was part of the project *Rural Energy Communities^{LV} - Catalysing and building capacities for renewable energy communities in rural Latvia*. This project is funded by the German Federal Foundation for the Environment (DBU) under its thematic project cluster *Citizen Energy*. Project partners are the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Schleswig-Holstein and the Latvian Rural Forum (LRF). The project is running from January 2024 until September 2025. Its overall objective is to enhance the development of renewable energy communities (RECs), especially in rural areas of Latvia. The main activities encompass a virtual policy dialogue, a study visit of Latvian policy makers and other experts to Schleswig-Holstein, the elaboration of relevant good practice cases, regional awareness raising, networking and capacity development activities in the four rural planning regions of Latvia, creation of regional task forces and 'REC ambassadors' as well as 'train the trainers' workshops. Moreover, the proposed project aims to catalyse and facilitate the development of one rural pilot renewable energy community in Latvia.

Purpose and Concept of the Study Visit

The study visit aimed to facilitate and deepen the mutual exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices between policy makers and community energy experts from Germany, particularly Schleswig-Holstein, and Latvia. The delegation from Latvia encompassed, inter alia, nine experts from the Ministry of Climate and Energy, the Public Utilities Commission (regulator), the State Construction Control Bureau, one regional energy agency and two enterprises (SMEs). The visit was coordinated by the Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein in cooperation with the project partner Latvian Rural Forum. The group visited various community energy projects in Schleswig-Holstein (including the Wiemersdorf community wind farm, the association and local heating cooperative Boben Op in Hürup, the company Solar-Energie Andresen GmbH, projects in the model municipalities of Sprakebüll and Klixbüll, a tenant electricity project of the community energy cooperative BürgerEnergie Nord (BEN) eG in Norderstedt, and a collective self-consumption project implemented in the ecological community housing estate Alte Gärtnerei in Kiel). In all cases, the experts engaged in a dialogue with the responsible stakeholders on site.

The visit also included a dialogue with experts from the Ministries for Energy Transition, Climate Protection, Environment and Nature (MEKUN) and Interior (MIKWS) of Schleswig-Holstein. The



participants learnt about the sister project of the Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein bewirk. The delegation's visit was complemented by an exchange with representatives from LEADER regions (called *Aktivregionen* in Schleswig-Holstein) on the role of LEADER regions in supporting energy communities and citizen energy.

Sites and projects visited

Community wind farm Wiemersdorf (8 October 2024)

The first station of the study visit was the community wind farm in Wiemersdorf, a village between Hamburg and Kiel with 1,600 inhabitants. The delegation was welcomed by Angela Kruppa, the mayor of Wiemersdorf, Karl Schäfer, one of landowners and limited partners of the wind farm and Dr. Gilbert Sieckmann-Joucken, deputy president of the county of Segeberg.

The development of the community wind farm was initiated in 1997 by 12 farmers/landowners. Their key motivation was the diversification of their income. At that time, several community wind farms had been already operating in the coastal regions of North Friesland in the north of Schleswig-Holstein, close to Denmark but were not yet common in the inner land of Schleswig-Holstein. Between 1997 and 2023 the wind farm underwent several phases of expansion. The first operating company was founded in 1997 under the legal form of a limited company (GmbH). In 2000, 2009 and 2014 further operating companies were founded. Their legal form was a hybrid of a limited liability company and a limited partnership (German: GmbH & Co. KG). This legal form has the advantage that many natural persons can financially participate as shareholders and no natural persons are liable with their private assets. Repowering of the oldest wind turbines started in 2020. Today, there are more than 100 shareholders (limited partners) mostly from the region. Financing was secured by 20% equity and 80% debt-financing, which is quite typical for projects of this kind.

The municipality benefits directly from annual business tax payments (*Gewerbesteuer*). This allowed the municipality to provide hot water supply for the local outdoor swimming pool, development of a community centre, and the implementation of many other projects fulfilling social purposes. Construction of the wind farm helped to raise local added value, business development, creation of other enterprises, and job creation. The managers of the company are planning to develop hydrogen production.

Collective electricity self-consumption at the ecological housing estate *Alte Gärtnerei* in Kiel (9 October 2024)

The second site visit was the ecological housing estate *Alte Gärtnerei* which is located in the south of Kiel. The delegation was welcomed by Jürgen Meereis, one of the founders of the housing estate and councillor in the City Council of Kiel. He was also one of the founders of the association *Stadt-Ökologie-Bildung e.V.* The housing estate consist of privately owned single-family buildings, embedded in community owned areas and facilities of a registered housing association. The estate and its Community Centre building offer space for social, cultural and ecological initiatives that are used far beyond the estate itself. Many of these activities are organised by a special non-profit association named *Stadt-Ökologie-Bildung e. V.*

The single-family buildings are privately owned by the residents with each having a small plot of land, but these plots are only 'islands' within the association's property (of which all residents/owners are members). The construction period was 1998 – 1999. The buildings have low-energy standards and

comply with ecological building standards. There are 17 building parties in 7 houses and approximately 45 residents (as of 2016).

The heat supply is organized centrally via a wood pellet heating plant. The housing estate has only one electricity connection with the public grid (via the community centre), otherwise it has its own lines. PV panels were installed with a capacity of 9kW. Initially, the electricity from the PV panels was fed into the public grid and remunerated via a feed in tariff. Since 2023 - after adoption of the so-called Easter Legislative Package by the Federal Government - the housing association has been able to pass the electricity on to its members (so called collective self-supply). Topics addressed during the dialogue included community decision-making structures, conflict resolution mechanisms, water supply and waste management, practical issues of energy sharing.

Non-profit association *Boben Op Klima- und Energiewende e.V.* (10 October 2024)

On 10 October 2024, the delegation visited three sites in the region of North Friesland close to the Danish border. This region can be regarded as the cradle of community wind energy in Schleswig-Holstein and Germany. The first stop was the village of Hürup where the local non-profit association *Boben Op Klima- und Energiewende e.V.* initiated several citizen and community driven energy initiatives. *Boben Op* is Low German dialect and means 'on top' or 'a nose ahead'. Hürup is located close to Flensburg and the Danish border and together with its neighbouring villages Maasbüll and Husby, the municipality has 2,400 inhabitants. Christoph Thomsen, managing director of the association guided the delegation on a 2 hour walk through the village. The Latvian delegation was informed about the following initiatives and projects:

- Citizen solar advisory service (since 2020). The initiative offers voluntary citizen solar advice as extended neighborhood help. This is a free of charge, manufacturer-independent initial consultation for homeowners in *Hürup*. The volunteer consultants check whether a PV system can be implemented on the roof, roughly estimate the economic viability and respond to the homeowner's individual questions. If there is interest in implementation, they record the building-specific data and obtain (comparable) offers from local/regional electrical installation companies.
- The local heating cooperative *Boben Op Nahwärme eG* started to construct and operate local heating networks in *Hürup*. The cooperative was founded independently of the association. It does not aim to make profits, but to supply affordable and sustainable heat for everyone. Its main purpose is to install and operate local heating networks in Hürup and neighbouring villages. The cooperative was inspired by the experience of Danish communities. Currently, the heating network is approximately 12 km long, with an additional 2.6 km under construction. The cooperative plans to combine solar thermal energy, geothermal storage, large heat pumps and biomass boilers. The '*Boben Op Nahwärme eG*' co-operative aims to use only regionally available, CO₂-neutral energy sources. The heat is currently produced in small-scale CHP plants and based on locally harvested wood residues from landscape management (hedgerows) pellets. The hedgerows serve important erosion protection and landscape/biodiversity protection functions. To preserve these functions and the traditional shape of the hedgerows, these must be regularly pruned.
- Electricity and gas pools: these are purchasing communities for the purchase of electricity and gas. Anyone who is/will be a member of the *BobenOp* association or lives in *Hürup* can join the pools. The pools represent well over 200 electricity customers, many of whom have been members since 2012. Once a year, a meeting is held for all those involved in the pool. Various

offers from suppliers are compared and a decision is made on which supplier/provider to purchase electricity or gas from in the coming year. The focus is on sustainability and good conditions, but also on reliability and service. As a bulk buyer, the pools can negotiate discounts. The group got also informed about the local tiny house settlement and a local ride-sharing bench (persons who sit on this bench signal that they want to hitch a spontaneous, free ride in a passenger car to a certain destination).

Solar company *Solar-Energie Andresen GmbH* (10 October 2024)

The group was welcomed by the company's managing director Christian Andresen, the founder of the company, Hans-Christian Andresen, and the mayor of Sprakebüll Jürgen Hansen. The company *Solar-Energie Andresen GmbH* has its headquarters in the village of Sprakebüll and was founded in 2004. Today, the company has 70 employees and plans/installs/operates rooftop and ground-mounted solar plants, community solar and wind farms, solar-powered field robots, etc. It has several subsidiaries/associated enterprises including a company operating a local biogas plant and 3 heating grids. The company management is also actively engaged in national and regional renewable energy industry associations and political lobby work.

The village of Sprakebüll has 260 inhabitants and is located close to the Danish border. Sprakebüll and the surrounding villages host multiple community energy projects including:

- Community wind farm Sprakebüll (1998, 15 MW)
- Community wind farm Stadum-Sprakebüll (2011, 11 MW)
- Community wind turbine Fehle (2014, 3 MW)
- Wind farm Iversacker (2022, 20 MW)
- Community solar farm Sprakebüll (2008, 1 MW)
- Community solar farm Achtrup (2010, 8,4 MW)
- Community solar farm Sprakebüll Ost (2013, 6 MW)
- Local heating grid cooperative EVS eG (2013)

Already in 1998, a community wind farm was constructed with 6 turbines in distance of 2 km. Villagers and farmers jointly raised the capital. In 2004, the solar company *Solar Andresen GmbH* was founded by Hans-Christian Andresen. Construction of a community solar farm followed in 2009. In 2011, the construction of a second community wind farm started, followed by the construction of a biogas pipeline from an agricultural biogas plant, of two biogas satellite CHP plants and a local DH network supplying 90% of the municipality with heat. The network is operated by a local energy cooperative (cooperation of municipality and energy cooperative). In the following years, further projects were implemented including the repowering of the first wind farm, the construction of second solar farm with financial participation of local residents, the development of a e-car sharing model (*Dörpsmobil*) and local charging stations for electric cars. The company also encompasses an organic farm and shop, as well as solar powered e-robots.

The municipality benefits from business taxes (*Gewerbesteuer*) paid by the RES plant operating companies and the company *Solar-Energie Andresen GmbH* (e.g. from the community wind farms: 400,000 EUR). Additionally, benefit sharing mechanisms were established, e.g., through a foundation initiated by the community wind farm. The revenues from the renewable energy installations are used to fund community projects, e.g. a new fire station, bike lanes, music education for children, village e-car/car sharing, charging stations, and private e-mobility. This example shows how the local use of renewable energy sources facilitated the creation of local added value, business and rural



development, job creation, and innovation, preventing rural depopulation. After a comprehensive introduction, the group visited one of the solar farms and one of the community wind turbines.

Municipality of Klixbüll (10 October 2024)

The municipality of Klixbüll was the final stop of the study visit in North Friesland. Klixbüll is located close to Danish border and has 1,000 inhabitants. The Latvian delegation was welcomed by Werner Schweizer, the former mayor of Klixbüll and Honorary Ambassador for Municipal Development Policy, and by Rolf Friedrichsen, the current mayor of Klixbüll. The group was hosted in the multifunctional community centre (*Dörpscampus*). The visit started with a presentation by Werner Schweizer illustrating the manifold community-led initiatives.

Klixbüll stands out not only with its community initiatives for renewable energy and emission-free mobility, but also as being one of the first municipalities in Germany to operationalize the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local level as a guiding principle. Moreover, the municipality is closely oriented towards the Economy for the Common Good (*Gemeinwohlökonomie*). Klixbüll has published an audited Common Good Balance Sheet and Common Good Report.

Klixbüll is also active in the Global Sustainable Municipality project and has signed the Agenda 2030 model resolution.

There are two community-owned wind farms built in 1993 and 2009 operated by SPPK Steady Power Project Klixbüll UG & Co. KG, a limited partnership involving local citizens as shareholders. Moreover, there is a local district heating network using waste heat from biogas plants. There are also two ground-mounted PV systems with an output of approximately 1.2 MW and an airborne wind power test station. The municipality offers e-car sharing for all residents (charged with electricity from wind farms). The project *Dörpsmobil Klixbüll* served as a lighthouse project for Schleswig-Holstein and many municipalities followed this example. Further projects include e-car charging stations and the installation of rooftop PV panels on public buildings.

Currently, the municipality is engaged in the development of an energy neighbourhood concept to optimize the local heat supply. Furthermore, it envisages the construction of an open-space photovoltaic system and extension of the community wind farm. There are plans to utilize surplus electricity from the wind turbines and to develop battery storage facilities and start production of green hydrogen.

After the presentation, the group visited the local airborne wind power test station for high-altitude wind turbines and the hydrogen filling station in Westre. In Westre, the company *Grenzstrom Bürgerwind GmbH & Co. KG* which operates a local community wind farm has built an electrolyser to produce hydrogen in combination with a hydrogen filling station. The electrolyser is supplied exclusively with electricity from the community wind farm, which is fed to the electrolyser via a direct line. The electrolyser and refuelling equipment are located in containers on site. Here, H2 cars can be refuelled with renewable hydrogen.

Tenant electricity project in Norderstedt implemented by the energy cooperative BürgerEnergieNord eG (11 October 2024)

The final stop of the study visit was the municipality of Norderstedt in the county of Segeberg, north of Hamburg. Anna Leidreiter, member of the executive board of the energy cooperative *BürgerEnergie Nord eG (BEN)*, introduced the delegation to the energy cooperative and showed a so-called tenant electricity project implemented in cooperation with the housing cooperative *Frederik's Hof* in Norderstedt. The energy cooperative BEN was founded in 2019 and has now more than 100 members.



The cooperative runs projects at different sites in Schleswig-Holstein (Kiel, Neumünster, Norderstedt etc.) and Hamburg. It supplies mainly tenants and flat owners in multi-family buildings with electricity from PV under the so called ‘tenant electricity supply model’ (*Mieterstrommodell*).

In 2017, this model was introduced via the Tenant Electricity Act, an omnibus act which included amendments of the Renewable Energy Sources Act and other legal acts. In short, ‘tenant electricity’ is electricity that is generated in solar systems on the roof of a multi apartment building and supplied to final consumers (tenants, apartment owners) in this building without passing electricity through the public grid. Electricity not consumed by the final consumers is fed into the public grid and remunerated. The German term for ‘tenant electricity’ (*Mieterstrom*) is misleading because the concept does not only address tenants, but residents of multi-apartment buildings in general, i.e. tenants and apartment owners. The legal framework for ‘tenant electricity’ has been continuously amended and the introduction of a special surcharge made the direct sale of solar electricity to tenants and other final consumers financially more attractive.¹

Under the ‘tenant electricity model’, the energy cooperative installs PV plants on multi-family buildings and supplies electricity to the tenants or flat owners of the buildings. It has currently 15 projects (including the project *Frederik’s Hof*).

The group visited the housing cooperative *Frederik’s Hof* in Norderstedt where a tenant electricity supply project has been implemented in 2023. This project included the construction of a 56-kWp PV system on the roof of the housing cooperative. Since mid-2024, 26 of the 32 flats have been supplied with solar power from their own roof, saving around 10% of their electricity costs.

The cooperative also offers two other models:

- Supply for municipalities (*Kommunalstrom*): the energy cooperative installs PV plants on municipal buildings and supplies electricity to the municipality/local authorities (7 projects)
- Supply for Industry and others (*Gewerbestrom*): the energy cooperative installs PV plants on commercial and non-commercial buildings such as parishes, foundations, sports clubs and other institutions (3 projects)

Visit to the Ministry of Energy Transition Climate Protection, Environment and Nature (MEKUN) (9 October 2024)

On 9 October 2024, the delegation visited the Ministry for Energy Transition, Climate Protection, Environment and Nature. The purpose was to learn about the policy and regulatory framework for energy communities in Germany and Schleswig-Holstein and enter into a dialogue with experts from MEKUN, the Ministry of the Interior, Municipal Affairs, Housing and Sport of Schleswig-Holstein and the University of Applied Sciences FH Westküste on related topics.

After a brief introduction of the project Rural Energy Communities^{LV} by the project coordinator Michael Krug (Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein) followed by a *tour de table*, Dr. Markus Hirschfeld, Head of Energy Policy and Energy Law Division, welcomed the delegation and shortly presented of renewable energy policies and climate policies of Schleswig-Holstein, costs and benefits of climate policies and energy transition, wind energy planning and transmission grid upgrading and extension. This was followed by a presentation of the current state of transposing and implementing the updated

¹ More information on tenant electricity model and the related concept of shared building supply (*gemeinschaftliche Gebäudeversorgung*) has been compiled in a specific factsheet to be found on the [project’s website](#).



Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) in Germany and Schleswig-Holstein by Cornelia Pankratz, Officer for Renewable Energy Sources Act and Bioenergy (MEKUN). Ulrich Tasch, Officer for Wind Energy Planning at the Ministry of the Interior illustrated the framework for spatial planning and designation of priority zones for wind energy in Schleswig-Holstein. Dr. Marlies Wiegand, Research Group Leader at the University of Applied Sciences FH Westküste introduced the group to ongoing research projects in the field of community energy, collective self-consumption and energy sharing in Schleswig-Holstein. The dialogue was complemented by Laura Paulsen, Officer for Financial RES Support Programmes (MEKUN) who introduced the audience to the Citizens' Energy Fund Schleswig-Holstein, a revolving fund that provides start up funding in the form of risk capital for citizen energy initiatives.

Dialogue with experts from the Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein and Local Action Groups in Schleswig-Holstein (9 October 2024)

The afternoon session of 9 October 2024 envisaged a dialogue with experts from the Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein and Local Action Groups under the European LEADER programme in Schleswig-Holstein. Doris Lorenz, member of the executive board of the Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein, welcomed the group and outlined key activities and projects of the foundation. Felicia Hofstätter, project manager at the Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein introduced the delegation to the networking initiative *Bewirk – Gemeinsam fürs Klima (Bewirk - Together for the Climate)* which is coordinated by the foundation. The German term *bewirken* means 'to trigger' or 'to effectuate' and the initiative aims to raise citizens' awareness and literacy on energy and sustainability issues. Moreover, the initiative seeks to motivate and enable citizens to be part of a living democracy and a society with citizens being active in their community, their district or their neighbourhood and acting together for the energy transition. *Bewirk* is engaged in capacity development activities including information events, workshops, mentoring activities, networking events etc. and has created networks for community solar initiatives (energy cooperatives, initiatives offering neighbourhood solar advice) and community district heating schemes in Schleswig-Holstein based on RES. Funding is provided by the German Postcode Lottery.

In the second part of the afternoon session, the delegation from Latvia entered a dialogue with experts from the LEADER network and Local Action Groups (known as *Aktivregionen*) in Schleswig-Holstein. The guiding question was 'How can LEADER/Local Action Groups facilitate the development of rural energy communities?' The dialogue was kicked off by a keynote presentation by Marie Halbach from the National Rural Support Unit in the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (DVS) who provided several inspiring showcases from Schleswig-Holstein and other regions in Germany. The dialogue session was joined by Dr. Dieter Kuhn and Sophia Roland (both from the Agenda Regio GmbH) and Torsten Sommer, Managing Director of the Academy for the Rural Areas of Schleswig-Holstein, the organization which was responsible for the coordination of the Local Action Groups in Schleswig-Holstein until recently.

Lessons learned from the study visit and expert dialogues

Regulatory framework

- While Schleswig-Holstein, particularly the region of North Friesland can be considered a pioneer in the field of community (wind) energy, community energy projects are still in an embryonic stage in Latvia.
- Germany has a long tradition of citizen participation in the energy sector, dating back to the early 20th century when electricity distribution cooperatives played a key role in the electrification of rural areas. Today, energy communities are relatively widespread and comprise a broad variety of different legal forms and business models. In Germany, community energy in its modern form has its roots in the anti-nuclear movement and the oil price crises of the 1970s and the 1980s.
- In Germany's federal system, the federal government has broad authority for legislation in the energy sector. Energy communities are mainly regulated by the federal government as well as the Federal Network Agency (*Bundesnetzagentur*). However, many of the 16 federal states (*Länder*) have formulated own climate and energy targets, strategies, and legislation. The federal states have important competences in the fields of permitting, spatial planning and the designation of suitable/priority zones for renewable energy. The federal states exert significant influence on the legislative process at the federal level via the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*).
- The federal states, regions, counties and municipalities have certain leeway in facilitating the development of energy communities and financial participation of citizens in energy projects. Municipalities have important competences in the field of planning and permitting. They play a key role in enhancing the development of energy communities, e.g., as potential members/shareholders, as owners of public buildings and estates (i.e. potential sites for the use of RES), or as facilitators and enablers.

Success factors in Schleswig-Holstein

- A crucial factor facilitating the emergence of energy communities in Germany and Schleswig-Holstein were attractive, long-term oriented feed-in tariffs/premiums anchored in the Renewable Energy Sources Act of 2000. This federal law has been continuously amended. The stable financial support helped create a low-risk investment environment also for community and citizen-led initiatives.
- While the Renewable Energy Sources Act played a crucial role for the uptake of renewable energy and community energy, several federal states developed complementary support and promotional measures to facilitate the development of community energy (e.g., citizen energy fund in Schleswig-Holstein).
- In 2017, the federal government at that time initiated a transition from price-based support schemes for renewable energy to competitive bidding and public tendering which led to a certain stagnation for the development of community energy. In 2022, the traffic light government decided to make use of the revised European 'de minimis' rules. Onshore wind energy plants or solar plants of citizen energy companies with an installed capacity of up to 18 MW and 6 MW respectively were exempted from the obligation to take part in competitive bidding for remuneration. The level of remuneration for the respective onshore wind turbines

and open space solar installations is now determined based on the average of the bid values of the highest successful bids in the previous year.

- From 2023, wind energy projects of citizen energy companies may also apply for start-up funding under a new federal grant-to-loan funding scheme. The development of this programme was inspired by a similar scheme implemented in Schleswig-Holstein already in 2018. The citizen energy fund (*Bürgerenergiefonds*) in Schleswig-Holstein is a revolving fund providing risk capital for citizen/community energy projects to pre-finance the upfront costs and preparatory measures in the sectors of renewable heat, mobility, renewable power generation, energy efficiency and digitalization. The fund is administered by the Investment Bank of Schleswig-Holstein (IB.SH), a 100% state owned development bank.
- In Schleswig-Holstein, local farmers, landowners, citizens and partly the municipalities played a key role as initiators and drivers of community energy projects. The acceptance of collective actions in the energy sector seems to be higher than in Latvia.

Challenges for energy communities in Latvia

- Apparently, socio-cultural barriers and a generally lower acceptance of collective approaches hamper community energy initiatives in Latvia. There is no tradition of collective action in the energy sector including energy cooperatives, although cooperatives were common in the agricultural sector in the interwar period 1918-1939/40 during the period of the nation's first independence. The forced collectivization under Soviet rule has caused negative attitudes towards the concept of collective action.
- A key obstacle is the lack of capital among private households, lower income levels, lower household savings rates and lower propensity to invest money in collective energy projects.
- Latvia was one of the first countries to introduce a feed in tariff system in the 1990s following the example of the German feed in law from 1990 (*Stromeinspeisegesetz*). However, the following years were accompanied by cases of misuse, malfunctioning and corruption and RES suffered from a negative image in society. Financial support for RES has been a politically highly sensitive issue during the last 20 years.
- In the energy sector, the current Latvian government pursues a liberal approach and level playing field for all market actors and generally refrains from introducing special privileges for specific groups and market actors. Promotional measures for activities like energy sharing such as reduced grid charges or special market premiums are not envisaged. However, the net accounting scheme, which was initially only applicable to households, has been extended to energy communities and other legal persons. The government is considering offering limited financial support, like e.g. tax incentives and/or investment support.
- The showcases of the study visit clearly illustrate that community projects and benefit sharing mechanisms offer various co-benefits including local income generation, tax revenues, added value and job creation, rural development, social cohesion, community support and acceptance of projects. On the other hand, energy communities face certain structural disadvantages compared to traditional market actors like cumbersome decision-making, less favorable financing conditions, less possibilities to use economies of scale etc. Therefore, it appears to be justified to incentivize the development of such collective approaches. The revised Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) explicitly requires all Member States to develop an enabling framework for renewable energy communities and to take their specificities into account when developing support schemes for RES.

- The lack of information and good practice showcases represents a critical challenge in Latvia.

Opportunities for energy communities in Latvia

- Latvia has almost completed the smart meter rollout which is an important prerequisite for local and decentralized approaches and the active involvement of citizens in the future. Digitization is key to enable peer to peer trading and energy sharing.
- The Latvian government has recently drafted a regulation which establishes a legal and regulatory framework for energy communities and energy sharing. Collective self-consumption behind the meter is already possible for a longer period, but in practice very few projects have been implemented so far.
- Recently, the Latvian government offered attractive investment grants to individual households for the installation of PV systems, combined with a net metering scheme. The net metering scheme has been recently replaced by a net accounting system which is also available for energy communities. However, there seems to be a need for complementary start-up support in order to kick start the development of pilot projects, particularly in rural regions.
- The study visit revealed opportunities to intensify the dialogue between Germany/Schleswig-Holstein and Latvia in the context of the LEADER programme. In both countries, LEADER may support energy communities through capacity building, networking, dissemination of good practices, (pre-)feasibility studies, provision of guidance etc.

Outlook: Perspectives of community energy in Latvia

- Facilitating the development of energy communities is a multi-level governance challenge which means that the national government, the planning regions and regional energy agencies, as well as the municipalities should take promotional measures.
- The showcases in Schleswig-Holstein illustrate that a stable legal and regulatory framework is essential for the success of energy communities. The Latvian government should accelerate the adoption of the regulatory framework and further create an enabling framework as requested by the recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED II). The government should actively support the development of pilot projects, particularly in rural regions which may serve as lighthouses and help to gain experience with the concept. This should be done in close collaboration with the planning regions and municipalities. The citizen energy fund established by the state government of Schleswig-Holstein has a model character for Latvia.
- While in Germany, farmers, landowners and citizens play(ed) a key role as initiators of community energy projects, in Latvia the planning regions, regional energy agencies and municipalities might be crucial drivers of such projects. Municipalities may offer public roofs and space serving as 'crystallization points' for the development of energy communities.

Next steps in the project

The next 'virtual' policy dialogue focusing on 'energy sharing' is planned for spring 2025 and a return visit by a group of German experts to Latvia is scheduled for early summer 2025. In the coming months, the Latvian Rural Forum is engaging in continuous networking and capacity development initiatives in collaboration with the planning regions and potential pilot communities.

Michael Krug, Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein



8 October 2024

Visit to the community wind farm in Wiemersdorf



9 October 2024

Dialogue with experts at the Ministry of Energy Transition, Climate Protection, Environment and Nature (MEKUN)



9 October 2024

Visit to the Ministry of Energy Transition Climate Protection, Environment and Nature (MEKUN)



9 October 2024
 Heinrich Böll Foundation
 Schleswig-Holstein (Cowork-
 House/ Anscharcampus)



9 October 2024
 Dialogue with experts from
 the Heinrich Böll
 Foundation Schleswig-
 Holstein and Local Action
 Groups in Schleswig-
 Holstein



9 October 2024
 Ecological housing estate
Alte Gärtnerei in Kiel,
 Dialogue with Jürgen
 Meereis



10 October 2024

Christoph Thomsen from the non-profit association *Bopen Op Klima- und Energiewende e.V.* (in front of the office of the local energy cooperative operating the district heating network *Bopen Op Nahwärme eG*)



10 October 2024

Dialogue with Christian Andresen, CEO of Solar Energie Andresen GmbH in Sprakebüll and Jürgen Hansen, the mayor of Sprakebüll



10 October 2024

Community solar farm and community wind farm in Sprakebüll



10 October 2024

The group in front of the Dörpscampus in Klixbüll with the former mayor Werner Schweizer



10 October 2024

Airborne wind power test station in the municipality of Klixbüll



11 October 2024

Anna Leidreiter from the energy cooperative BürgerEnergie Nord eG explains the tenant electricity project implemented in cooperation with the housing cooperative Frederik's Hof in Norderstedt