**Study Visit for Community Energy Experts**

**To Latvia**

***Enhancing Energy Communities in Rural Regions –***

***Knowledge Exchange Between Schleswig-Holstein and Latvia***

**Date: 10 – 13 June 2025**

**Purpose of the project Rural Energy CommunitiesLV**

The study visit is part of the project *Rural Energy CommunitiesLV - 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 runs 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 to Schleswig-Holstein, a return visit of German energy community experts to Latvia, the elaboration of 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 project aims to catalyse and facilitate the development of one rural pilot renewable energy community.

**Purpose of the Study Visit**

The study visit aims to facilitate and deepen mutual exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices between community energy experts from Schleswig-Holstein and Latvia. It encompasses dialogues with local stakeholders and experts from potential pilot energy communities in Latvia. These pilot communities include Vārme and Ragaciems in the Western part of the country. Inspired by a Call for Interest carried out by the Latvian Rural Forum in the context of Rural Energy CommunityLV project, local actors in these communities are considering creating energy communities with the aim of sharing energy among its members. The study visit aims to enter into a dialogue with these initiatives and to provide targeted assistance and advise. Issues to be addressed include, inter alia, local acceptance of wind and solar farms, procedural and financial citizen participation in wind and solar farms, perspectives and steps to setup a citizen/community energy initiative (e.g., cooperative), citizen mobilization strategies, renewable energy policies, energy sharing, support and financing schemes for community energy. The participants of the study visit will also join and actively participate in the 7th Latvian Rural Communities Parliament in Mālpils which will take place from 11-13 June 2025.

**Group**: 4 experts from Germany including 1 person from project partner Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein.

**Language**: English

**Time Schedule**

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| **Day 1: Tuesday, 10 June 2025**  **Arrival in Riga, Latvia** | |
| **22:35** | Arrival of participants at Riga Airport, transfer to hotel  Accommodation at [Ibis Riga Centre](https://all.accor.com/hotel/A016/index.en.shtml?utm_campaign=seo+maps&utm_medium=seo+maps&utm_source=google+Maps), Marijas iela 5, Rīga, LV-1050, Latvia |

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| **Day 2: Wednesday, 11 June 2025**  **Visit to the potential pilot energy communities in Vārme and Ragaciems** | |
| **09:00** | Leaving hotel, transfer to Vārme |
| **11:00-12:30** | **Meeting in Vārme community, Signe Petrēvica**  **Dialogue with local stakeholders and experts**  *Vārme parish, Municipality of Kuldīga*  *Welcome and introduction by Signe Petrēvica (Vārme parish)*  *Expert inputs by Christian Andresen (Solar-Energie Andresen GmbH) and Thomas Leidreiter (BürgerEnergie Nord eG)*  *Description:*  *Vārme has 880 inhabitants and has undertaken several notable sustainability initiatives. The community was awarded the label of a ‘smart village.’ In its vicinity, a 94 MW open space solar farm is running now. The project is owned by the Lithuanian developer UAB Ignitis Renewables. Commissioning is planned for 2025. Ignitis Renewables has launched a benefit sharing programme for local communities affected by the RE projects that the company implements. In Vārme, there are currently two projects funded under this programme: the project ‘Smart Solar Circle 2030’ provides for the installation of 100% solar lighting lanterns and video surveillance in the village. This also includes increasing the number of EV charging ports. The second project aims to improve infrastructure by renovating pedestrian sidewalks and installing environmentally friendly lighting for the sports field. Several local actors are considering to create an energy community with the aim of sharing energy among its members. Challenges are a lack of funding for the installation of PV installations on municipal buildings and the unclear terms under which an energy community can cooperate with an energy trader and surplus electricity might be sold to the grid. Another challenge for the community is the fact that Ignitis Renewables is currently planning to construct a wind farm with 20 wind turbines and a total capacity of at least 150 MW in the vicinity of the community.* |
| **13:00** | Lunch in Kuldīga, [Café Riverside](https://visitkuldiga.com/garsa/restorani-un-kafejnicas/kafejnica-cafe-riverside/) |
| **17:00** | **Meeting in Ragaciems community, Dario Ramuss** [Selgas iela 1E, Ragaciems, Lapmežciems parish, Municipality of Tukums](https://www.lursoft.lv/adrese/selgas-iela-1e-ragaciems-lapmezciema-pagasts-tukuma-novads-lv-3118/strukturvienibas) **Dialogue with local stakeholders and experts**  *Welcome and introduction by Dario Ramuss*  *Expert inputs by Christian Andresen (Solar-Energie Andresen GmbH) and Thomas Leidreiter (BürgerEnergie Nord eG)*  *Description:*  *The village has a fish market with an outdoor area and several small houses - fryer, shops, fish places, which together have a high electricity consumption in the summer. The idea is to discuss the perspectives of setting up an energy community by installing solar panels and sharing electricity.* |
| **20:00** | Dinner at BERMUDAS fish restaurant <https://www.bermudas.lv/en/> |

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| **Day 3: Thursday, 12 June 2025**  **Latvian Rural Community Parliament and workshop** | |
| **08:00** | Leaving hotel, transfer to *Mālpils* |
| **09:00** | **Opening ceremony of Latvian Rural Community Parliament**  *Mālpils Culture Centre, Mālpils parish, Municipality of Sigulda*  <https://parlaments.laukuforums.lv/> |
| **11:00** | **Speeches and discussions on current and future rural development** |
| **13:00** | *Break* |
| **14:00-15:30** | **Workshop 1**  **Energy and community: Towards acceptance and sustainability.**  The interaction of renewable energy technologies (wind and solar farms) with local communities as they become part of the everyday landscape. Experiences from Germany on public participation, trust building and dialogue with citizens that have helped to promote the acceptance of renewable energy in local communities.  Guiding questions:   * How to ensure acceptance/support for wind and solar farms? * Which policies and measures can help facilitate support/acceptance? * Which strategies to employ to deal with opponents?   *Brief expert inputs by Christian Andresen (Solar-Energie Andresen GmbH), Thomas Leidreiter (BürgerEnergie Nord eG) and Gilbert Sieckmann-Joucken (Consultant)* |
| **16:00-17:30** | **Workshop 2**  **Energy communities and local energy independence**.  Community-led energy solutions for the rural future. Legal framework, best practices and experience stories from German energy communities, expert advice and recommendations.  Guiding questions:   * How to mobilize citizens to take part in energy communities? * What are the key success factors and challenges for energy communities? * Which policies and measures are helpful to support the development of energy communities?   *Brief expert inputs by Christian Andresen (Solar-Energie Andresen GmbH) and Thomas Leidreiter (BürgerEnergie Nord eG)* |
| **19:00** | **Networking and discovering the uniqueness of Mālpils**  Tasting of local products and tasting of flavors from the regions represented by the participants in Latvia and Europe.  Exploring the local culture of Mālpils and networking.  Local crafts market. |

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| **Day 4: Friday, 13 June 2025**  **Site Visit/Departure** | |
| **09:00** | Leaving hotel |
| **10:00 – 11:30** | **Site visit: Salaspils Siltums**  *Miera iela 31A, Municipality of Salaspils*  <https://salaspilssiltums.lv/>  *Description:*  *Salaspils Siltums is a municipal district heating company that operates the largest solar district heating system in the Baltic region. At least 90% of the thermal energy produced is based on renewable energy sources, i.e. solar energy and biomass. The solar plant comprises 1,720 collectors providing an annual output of 12,000 MWh. The system includes an 8,000 m3 seasonal storage system and a 3 MW biomass boiler.* |
| **11:30** | Departure to Riga |
| **12:00** | Arrival in Riga/End of the Study Visit |
| **13:00 – 14:30** | Debriefing/Internal project meeting of project partners |