



Status Meeting of the German Country Desk 30.09.2021

SUMMARY REPORT

21.10.2021

Michael Krug, M. Rosaria Di Nucci, Vincenzo Gatta



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 953040. The sole responsibility for the content of this document lies with the COME RES project and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union.

www.com-res.eu

Executive Summary

Since 1 September 2020 the Environmental Policy Research Centre (FFU) of the Freie Universität Berlin has been coordinating the Horizon 2020 project COME RES, which aims to facilitate the market development of renewable energies in the electricity sector through the advancement of Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) in nine EU countries. So-called country desks have been set up in Germany and the other partner countries. The country desks serve as informal dialogue forums where, in addition to (interim) project results, current topics such as barriers, drivers and development opportunities for RECs are regularly discussed with actors and stakeholders. The country desk in Germany is coordinated by the Environmental Policy Research Centre. The technological focus in Germany is on wind energy (onshore) and integrated approaches (e.g. microgrids, virtual power plants). The regional focus is primarily on Thuringia as target region and on Schleswig-Holstein as model region. However, relevant developments in other federal states are considered.

In addition to thematic workshops on relevant topics, regular country desk meetings are held. On September 30, 2021, a so-called status meeting was organised online by the FFU in cooperation with the Wind Energy Service Unit of the Thuringian Energy and GreenTech Agency (ThEGA) and moderated by Dr. Bettina Knothe, Consultant for Participatory Sustainability. The purpose of this meeting was to present outcomes and current activities of the COME RES project, to discuss business models and good practice cases and to reflect on actual policy developments in Germany, in particular, in view of the results of the Bundestag elections. The status meeting aimed to provide an opportunity for exchange and networking for the 54 participants in a (virtual) space.

The meeting was structured into three sections: First, new project findings including the results of an analysis of REC potentials in Thuringia and current activities of the COME RES project were presented, followed by four good practice cases of energy communities in Germany. The third session was dedicated to the enabling framework for RECs. Participants discussed the future of the energy transition and the transposition of the RED II and its provisions for RECs in Germany after the federal parliament elections of 2021. The meeting was concluded by a discussion of the specifications of a citizen energy fund in Thuringia which soon will start operation. A detailed documentation of the workshop in German language including the presentation slides can be found on the COME RES website <https://come-res.eu/stakeholder-desks/germany>.

Highlights of the event

Prof. Dieter Sell (ThEGA) opened the meeting together with Dr. Rosaria Di Nucci (FFU). Further on, Dr. Di Nucci and Michael Krug (FFU) presented key activities and preliminary results of the COME RES project. Rosaria Di Nucci also introduced some activities of other COME RES country desks, especially Italy and Portugal. Michael Krug gave a brief review of the two previous country desk meetings which have been documented in detail on the project website. Further, he presented together with Vincenzo Gatta key assumptions and selected results of the assessment of potentials for RECs in Thuringia that were recently compiled as a project report. Several participants questioned the assumption of 100% self-financing by citizens, and considered this not realistic at least for wind energy. Michael Krug

specified that the condition of 100% self-financing does not exclude the possibility of taking up loans and that the assumptions had to reflect the different conditions in each country included in the study. However, the presenters conceded that in the case of wind energy, a 20% share of citizen-based financing is more realistic.

Johannes Vollmer (bbh) gave preliminary insights of an analysis of REC business models and provided examples from different COME RES countries, especially Italy. Here, the RED II with its provisions for RECs has been largely transposed to national law and an enabling framework for RECs is taking shape. A high public interest and various impulses from local public authorities helped to develop a large number of RECs, especially in small municipalities which aim to benefit from those RECs. In comparison to the Italian case, Horst Leithoff (BWE Schleswig-Holstein) referred to the difficult framework conditions in Germany where energy sharing and self-consumption by members of a REC are practically impossible. The same would be true for combinations of energy production, energy storage and energy refinement which would be hampered by the restrictive system of taxes, fees and surcharges. Subsequently, a survey among the participants of the meeting showed that electricity and heat production (70%), energy sharing and collective self-consumption (59%), tenant electricity models (52%) and electricity sales (41%) are considered as the most promising business areas for energy communities in the future.

Next, four good practice cases were presented: the wind farm Uthleben in Thuringia, the cooperative Energielandwerker eG in North Rhine-Westphalia, a pool of five citizen wind farms in Schleswig-Holstein ("Grenzland-Pool") and a pilot project in the field of energy sharing based on so called consumer stock ownership plans in the scope of the Horizon 2020 project SCORE. The cases illustrated that cooperation not only between citizen is important, but also between different market actors like cooperatives and other citizen-based organisations, municipal utility companies and project developers. It proved fruitful to join forces and pool different citizen energy projects in order to gain a stronger market position and to profit from value-added effects, e.g. when selling electricity while owning local substations. Furthermore, RECs can profit from the collaboration and know-how of project developers and municipal utilities. In this manner, RECs can reduce risks and counteract the consequences of the increasing complexity of the legal framework that discourage citizen to engage in citizen energy projects. All these synergies are best illustrated in the concept of energy sharing.

The final section was dedicated to the enabling framework for RECs. First, Dr. Julia Verlinden (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), member of the previous and newly elected federal parliament and so far energy policy spokeswoman of the Green Party, gave a keynote presentation on the prospects of the energy transition in general and on the implementation of RED II after the Bundestag elections in particular. She argued in favor of a higher CO₂ pricing and also pleaded for a reform of the electricity market design. She said two trends could be observed, flexibilization and digitalization, which could contribute to a further decentralization of electricity production. Further, she saw a need for action regarding the transposition and implementation of the relevant EU directives, especially in the area of collective self-consumption, energy sharing and energy communities. In the following discussion she emphasized the role of citizen and community energy in order to allocate new investments for the energy transition. However, the

developments in Brussels should always be kept in mind (e.g. with regard to the “de minimis rule” and the new State Aid Guidelines). She supported the development of a citizen energy fund on the federal level as a useful tool measure to set uniform standards.

In the final presentation, Prof. Dieter Sell (ThEGA) illustrated cornerstones of the planned citizen energy fund in Thuringia. The fund is expected to start operation in November 2021. It will be based on a funding guideline (*Förderrichtlinie*) and largely follows the example of the citizen energy fund in Schleswig-Holstein. The participants emphasised the importance of a clear definition of citizen energy in order to prevent the misuse of state funds. In this regard, Ramona Rothe (ThEGA) explained that according to the funding guideline, which should be available in the near future, the fund will offer financing of citizen energy projects in the planning and start-up phase. 500,000 EUR have been earmarked from the state budget. The aim is to strengthen citizen energy projects in the fields of renewable electricity and heat generation, energy efficiency, new mobility and digitalisation in the energy sector. As a rule, funding is awarded in the form of a conditionally repayable and interest-bearing grant to citizen collectives comprising at least seven natural persons who must have their primary residence in the municipality concerned. In addition to that, and similar to the case in Schleswig-Holstein, planned projects would be examined very carefully for their feasibility.

In his conclusions, Michael Krug (FFU) highlighted the importance and urgency of implementing the relevant EU directives and their provisions for energy communities. Insights from other countries can be very helpful, the developments in Austria and Italy deserve particular attention. The experience of these countries is going to be examined in more detail during the next country desk meeting which is planned to be carried out in February/March 2022. Furthermore, some of the partner countries or model regions in the COME RES project provide additional inspiration as they have formulated quantitative political goals for citizen energy or financial participation of citizens. However, in the existing target architecture of the German energy transition, this is a blank space and it is worth considering the inclusion of quantitative and/or qualitative targets for citizen energy in general and energy communities in particular. In addition, the EU level should always be kept in mind, as important decisions are currently being made there, such as the revision of the State Aid Guidelines. Finally, the event and particularly the good practice cases illustrated how important cooperation between citizen energy actors and municipal utilities can be and how valuable networking and clustering among citizen energy actors is.

CONTACT

Dr. Rosaria Di Nucci (Project Coordination)
dinucci@zedat.fu-berlin.de

Michael Krug (Coordination of German Country Desk)
mikru@zedat.fu-berlin.de

COME RES Project
info@come-res.eu
www.come-res.eu

PARTNERS



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 953040. The sole responsibility for the content of this document lies with the COME RES project and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union.