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**Advancing Renewable
Energy Communities**

KICK-OFF MEETING OF THE GERMAN COUNTRY DESK ON 11 DECEMBER 2020

SUMMARY REPORT

Date: 22.12.2020

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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.

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The Horizon 2020-Project COME RES

The Horizon 2020 project COME RES aims to facilitate the market development of renewable energies in the electricity sector through the dissemination of renewable energy communities in nine EU countries. The project is coordinated by the Environmental Policy Research Centre (FFU) of Freie Universität Berlin (FUB) and the project consortium comprises 16 European partner organisations.

The German Country Desk

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 project results, current topics such as barriers, drivers and development opportunities for RECs are regularly discussed with actors and stakeholders. The country desk is coordinated by the Environmental Policy Research Centre. The thematic 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 the target region. At the same time, the developments in other federal states will also be considered, especially in Schleswig-Holstein, a pioneer state in terms of citizen wind power and a model region for COME RES, but also in other federal states.

Purpose of the Kick-Off Meeting

The aim of the kick-off meeting was twofold: to discuss current developments and problems of energy communities in Thuringia and Schleswig-Holstein with a core group of stakeholders on the one hand, and to elicit possible topics of the country desk and thematic workshops for 2021/2022 and to plan further steps on the other. The kick-off meeting was organised by FFU in cooperation with the Service Unit Wind Energy of the Thuringian Energy and GreenTech Agency (ThEGA) and Dr Bettina Knothe, advisor for participation-oriented sustainability. In total, the event gathered 36 persons from 27 organisations. The presentation slides can be found in the German documentation of the Kick-Off Meeting.

Agenda

Moderation: Dr Bettina Knothe, Advisor for Participation Oriented Sustainability

- 09:30** **Welcome**
Dr. M. Rosaria Di Nucci, Freie Universität Berlin, Environmental Policy Research Centre
Prof. Dr. Dieter Sell, Thüringer Energie- und GreenTech-Agentur (TheGA)
- 09:40** **Brief introduction of the participants by the moderator**
- 09:50** **The COME RES Project: Objectives, Tasks, Classification and Role of the Country Desk**
Dr. M. Rosaria Di Nucci, Freie Universität Berlin, Environmental Policy Research Centre
- 10:00** **The European legal framework for energy communities**
Michael Krug, Freie Universität Berlin, Environmental Policy Research Centre
- 10:10** **Amendments to the Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG) - the Perspective of Energy Cooperatives also in view of the Renewable Energy Directive and the Internal Electricity Market Directive**
René Groß, Bundesgeschäftsstelle Energiegenossenschaften, Deutscher Genossenschafts- und Raiffeisenverband e.V. (DGRV)
- 10:25** **Discussion**
- 10:35** **Framework Conditions for Citizen Energy in the COME RES Target Region Thuringia**
Ramona Rothe, TheGA, Servicestelle für Windenergie
- 10:45** **Impulse 1: Obstacles, Problem Areas and Examples of Good Practice in Thuringia**
Prof. Reinhard Guthke und Marcel Schwalbach, BürgerEnergie Thüringen e.V.
- 10:55** **Discussion**
- 11:05** **Framework Conditions for Citizen Energy in the COME RES Model Region Schleswig-Holstein**
Angelika Behlig und Milena Schulz-Gärtner, Ministerium für Energiewende, Landwirtschaft, Umwelt, Natur und Digitalisierung Schleswig-Holstein
- 11:20** **Impulse 2: Obstacles, Problem Areas and Examples of Good Practice in Schleswig-Holstein**
Nicole Knudsen, Bundesverband Windenergie (BWE), Landesverband Schleswig-Holstein
- 11:30** **Discussion**
- 11:45** **Break**
- 12:00** **Interactive session on Framework Conditions, Obstacles, Problem Solutions**
Moderation: Dr. Bettina Knothe, Beraterin für Teilhabeorientierte Nachhaltigkeit
- 13:00** **Identification of Possible Topics for the Upcoming Meetings and Thematic Workshops in 2021 and 2022**
Michael Krug, Freie Universität Berlin, Environmental Policy Research Centre
- 13:10** **Discussion**
- 13:30** **Summary**
Dr Bettina Knothe, Beraterin für Teilhabeorientierte Nachhaltigkeit
Dr. M. Rosaria Di Nucci, Freie Universität Berlin, Environmental Policy Research Centre

List of Participating Organisations

Region	Organisation
National level	Fachagentur Windenergie an Land e.V.
National level	Bundesverband WindEnergie e.V.
National level	Bündnis Bürgerenergie (BBEn e.V.)
National level	Bundesgeschäftsstelle Energiegenossenschaften beim DGRV
Thuringia	Thüringer Ministerium für Umwelt, Energie und Naturschutz
Thuringia	Thüringer Energie- und GreenTech Agentur (ThEGA)
Thuringia	ThEGA, Servicestelle Windenergie
Thuringia	ThEGA, Servicestelle Solar
Thuringia	BürgerEnergie Thüringen e.V.
Thuringia	Energiegenossenschaft Ilmtal eG
Thuringia	Bürger Energie Saale-Holzland
Thuringia	BürgerKraft Thüringen eG
Thuringia	Energiequelle GmbH
Thuringia/Hesse	Deutsche Kreditbank
Thuringia	BWE-Landesverband Thüringen
Thuringia	Windkraft Thüringen GmbH & Co. KG
Saxony/Thuringia	Genossenschaftsverband – Verband der Regionen e.V. Geschäftsstelle Leipzig
Schleswig-Holstein	Ministerium für Energiewende, Landwirtschaft, Umwelt, Natur und Digitalisierung des Landes Schleswig-Holstein
Schleswig-Holstein	Bundesverband WindEnergie e.V., Landesverband Schleswig-Holstein
Schleswig-Holstein	Genossenschaftsverband – Verband der Regionen e.V. Geschäftsstelle Rendsburg
Schleswig-Holstein	Energiebürger Schleswig-Holstein (c/o Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Schleswig-Holstein)
Schleswig-Holstein	Verbraucherzentrale Schleswig-Holstein
North Rhine-Westphalia	EnergieAgentur NRW
Berlin	Freie Universität Berlin
Geneva	Center for Environmental International Law
Brussels	Becker Büttner Held bbh
Berlin	Beratung für Teilhabeorientierte Nachhaltigkeit

Results of the Discussion: Objectives and Contents of COME RES, European Legal Framework

COME RES as an Input Provider for Policy Formulation Processes

- The project coordinator M.R. Di Nucci (FU Berlin) explained that COME RES particularly seeks to support the transposition and implementation of the recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) in the partner countries. However, due to the transposition deadline of 30 June 2021, the possibilities of the project to inform the process of transposition in the partner countries are limited. Two thematic workshops are planned in March and June 2021, which will be dedicated to the transposition into national law.
- Most project outputs will be generated after June 2021. Therefore, the COME RES project partners would focus on the implementation and enforcement of national law and the implementation of an enabling framework for renewable energy communities (RECs).
- According to M. Krug (FU Berlin), one of the goals of COME RES is to get actively involved in policy formulation and consultation processes at the EU level, but, particularly, at the level of the national states and target/model regions. This is primarily ensured through the project partners. As with the WinWind project, roundtables (so-called policy labs) with decision-makers from politics and administration are planned in all partner countries. A policy roundtable at EU level addressing the implementation of the recast Renewable Energy Directive (RED II) is also planned in 2022 as part of the EU Sustainable Energy Week.

COME RES as a Stimulus for Good Practice Transfers

- According to M. Krug (FU Berlin), one goal of COME RES is to initiate the transfer of good practice between the partner countries or within the partner countries. The respective transfer activities will take place primarily in 2022. In addition to the involvement of mentors and the formation of transfer teams, on-site visits and transfer workshops are planned.

Participants of the Country Desk

- M. Krug (FU Berlin) emphasised that the country desks aim to represent a broad spectrum of actors and stakeholders. Project developers and representatives of the energy sector and municipal utilities will also be invited. Windkraft Thüringen, a joint venture of 14 Thuringian municipal utilities and energy supply companies, is already represented at the kick-off event. Although citizen energy projects are usually not part of the core business of municipal utilities, the number of innovative co-operations between municipal utility companies and energy cooperatives (see below, examples from Thuringia).

Implementation of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED II), especially on Energy Communities

- As R. Groß (Bundesgeschäftsstelle Energiegenossenschaften) pointed out, the planned amendments of the Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG) only insufficiently transpose the provisions of the RED II relevant for energy communities. In particular, there were considerable transposition deficits with regard to Article 21 (on jointly acting renewables self-consumers) and Article 22 (on renewable energy communities) of the Directive. Although improvements are planned for individual self-suppliers and tenants' electricity projects, the regulations regarding community self-supply and member supply (energy sharing) are not implemented. Legal definitions of energy communities and an enabling framework for RECs that would fully meet the requirements of RED II do not yet exist, or partly at best. An assessment of the potentials and barriers, which is also to be carried out by the Member States, is also not yet available.
- R. Groß added that in view of the current political constellations not much more could have been expected. He was sceptical whether there will be crucial changes in the election year 2021.
- M. Zieher (Bündnis Bürgerenergie) emphasised that tenant electricity projects do not mean an implementation of RED II. Jointly acting renewables self-consumers are defined differently and more broadly in the Directive.

Results of the Discussion: Framework Conditions, Obstacles, Problem Solutions

Regional Peculiarities and Transfer Possibilities

- N. Knudsen (Bundesverband Windenergie, Schleswig-Holstein), described the special features of community energy in Schleswig-Holstein and the historical development of citizen wind farms. A key success factor were the guaranteed feed-in tariffs provided through the Electricity Feed Act (*Stromeinspeisegesetz*) and the Renewable Energy Sources Act (*Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz*) which ensured a high level of planning security for investors in the past. The model of citizen/community wind farms in SH is certainly not fully transferable to other regions, but there are definitely parallels and common challenges.

Co-operations between Municipal Utility Companies and Citizen Energy Cooperatives

- Various participants referred to existing co-operations between municipal utilities and energy cooperatives in Thuringia. For example, according to Prof. Guthke (BürgerEnergie Thüringen), the energy cooperative *Bürgerenergie Jena* owns a 2 percent share in the municipal utility company *Stadtwerke Energie Jena-Pößneck*. According to T. Winkelmann (BürgerEnergie Saale-Holzland), the regional municipal utilities are involved in *BürgerEnergie Saale-Holzland*. According to M. Golle (Energiegenossenschaft Ilmtal eG), there is also a "symbolic" participation

by the Weimar municipal utility in the energy cooperative *Ilmtal eG*. According to Prof. Guthke, the *Bürgerwerke eG* with its approximately 100 cooperatives functions as an energy supplier.

- According to N. Knudsen (Bundesverband Windenergie, Schleswig-Holstein), no comparable formalised cooperation structures between municipal utilities and citizens' energy cooperatives are known in Schleswig-Holstein (except for Power Purchase Agreements, PPAs).
- M. Zieher (Bündnis Bürgerenergie) referred to the example of North Hesse, where the *Stadtwerke Union Nordhessen (SUN)* substantially involves energy cooperatives in its projects.
- According to M. Schwalbach (BürgerEnergie Thüringen), energy sharing makes energy cooperatives more interesting for project developers. T. Janneck (Verbraucherzentrale Schleswig-Holstein) and M. Golle (Energiegenossenschaft Ilmtal eG) suggested to explore further cooperation possibilities between energy cooperatives and municipal utilities. R. Simke (Energieagentur.NRW) mentioned the example of the Münster region in North Rhine-Westphalia, where municipal utilities planned wind farms and later sold them to citizens' energy cooperatives.
- An overview of co-operations between municipal utilities and energy cooperatives in Germany can be found here: [Kooperation mit Stadtwerken - Energiewende Jetzt \(energiegenossenschaften-gruenden.de\)](https://www.energiegenossenschaften-gruenden.de)

Citizens' Energy Funds in Schleswig-Holstein and Thuringia

- In their joint presentation, A. Behlig and M. Schulz-Gärtner (Ministerium für Energiewende, Landwirtschaft, Umwelt, Natur und Digitalisierung des Landes Schleswig-Holstein) introduced the Citizens' Energy Fund (*Bürgerenergiefonds*) of Schleswig-Holstein that was established in 2018. Through this fund, projects are supported in the start-up phase, in which project financing is not yet available. Projects in the fields of RES based heating, RES based electricity, mobility, energy efficiency and digitalisation of the energy transition can be funded with a maximum of 200,000 EUR. The money would be returned to the fund as soon as project planning has progressed and the overall project is being financed.
- M. Schwalbach (BürgerEnergie Thüringen) and M. Golle (Energiegenossenschaft Ilmtal eG) mentioned current plans to set up a citizens' energy fund in Thuringia based on the model of Schleswig-Holstein. Funds amounting to 2 mln. EUR have been allocated in the Thuringian state budget for 2021. However, a corresponding regulation/guideline has now to be developed. M. Krug (FUB) emphasised that COME RES basically aims to support "transfers" of good practice and offered the assistance of COME RES for such transfer activities. He also pointed out that Thuringia with its Wind Energy Service Unit has already an effective institutional infrastructure which can support such a fund by providing information and advise for citizens, cooperatives, community initiatives, and municipalities.
- D. Fouquet (Becker Büttner Held) suggested to examine the possibilities of using the new Corona aid funds to set up such funds in other federal states as well.
- R. Groß (Bundesgeschäftsstelle Energiegenossenschaften) pointed out that the Federal Office for Energy Cooperatives has been campaigning for a similar fund at the federal level for some time.

Opportunities and Risks of Digitalisation for Energy Communities

- T. Janneck (Verbraucherzentrale Schleswig-Holstein) addressed the opportunities and risks of digitalisation for energy cooperatives and also questioned the competitiveness of citizens' energy cooperatives. He referred to new foreign players entering the electricity market, especially in the fields of on-site trading and energy sharing. If these fields were occupied by foreign investors who also offer cheap and green electricity, the question arises why individuals should join an energy community if this was supposedly more time-consuming and expensive.
- Further, the question was raised to what extent energy cooperatives may be supported by means of digital trading platforms. According to R. Groß (Bundesgeschäftsstelle Energiegenossenschaften) such platforms are still under development. Prof. Guthke (BürgerEnergie Thüringen) referred to the positive experience of cooperative RES electricity sales via *Bürgerwerke eG*.
- S. Siegmund (Energiequelle GmbH) also emphasised the cost aspect: low-cost electricity was central for reaching the masses.

Land Availability and Land Securing Practices

- D. Lorenz (Energiebürger.SH) and F. Sondershaus (Fachagentur Windenergie an Land) pointed out the problem that the land is often secured at an early stage by project developers, which are usually not much interested in cooperating with energy communities. Many landowners are not aware of the option of developing a community/citizen wind farm. In such a situation, even a citizens' energy fund cannot have much effect. It would be definitively an improvement if the respective planning authorities which are responsible for the designation of wind energy zones in their spatial plans consulted the landowners at an early stage. In this way, landowners could be informed about the general options for action, the advantages and disadvantages of these options (commercial developer-led vs. community-led), and sensitised for the option of developing a community/citizens' wind farm. The advantages of energy communities in terms of local value creation, public interest orientation and acceptability may be communicated in a targeted manner.
- In this context, M. Krug (FUB) referred to the example of the Steinfurt district in North Rhine-Westphalia, which has been practising such a proactive approach for several years. M. Golle (Energiegenossenschaft Ilmtal eG) underlined the pioneering role of the district of Steinfurt and noted that the district's Wind Energy Service Unit which had been established already in 2011 served as a model for the development of a similar organization in the federal state of Thuringia.
- S. Siegmund (Energiequelle GmbH) stressed the importance of spatial planning and the role of the regional planning communities. He suggested to examine possibilities of providing certain privileges to energy communities in the context of wind energy zoning (i.e. the designation of wind energy suitable/priority areas).

Acceptance Problems

- The problem of decreasing local acceptance of wind farms including of community wind farms was mentioned several times. D. Lorenz (Energiebürger SH) and Prof. Guthke (BürgerEnergie Thüringen) emphasised the increasing polarisation in many communities and the high risk of social disruption. Energy cooperatives and citizen energy movements therefore tended to move away from wind power projects towards systems that are more accepted, such as rooftop PV systems. The "silent majority" in local communities (e.g. also in church communities) often do not dare to take position in favour of wind turbines or large-scale ground-mounted PV facilities for fear of a growing social divide.
- N. Knudsen (Bundesverband Windenergie, Schleswig-Holstein) pointed out that acceptance cannot be explained by monetary factors alone. In this context, she also suggested to clarify the terms acceptance/acceptability. R. Di Nucci (FU Berlin) pointed out that the preceding project WinWind had dealt intensively with questions of acceptance and acceptability of renewable energy projects, especially wind energy, and that all documents and a number of published articles could be found on the project's website (www.winwind-project.eu).

Opportunities: Economy for the Common Good (*Gemeinwohlökonomie*)

- Furthermore, opportunities to overcome acceptance problems were discussed. N. Knudsen (Bundesverband Windenergie, Schleswig-Holstein) referred to the experiences in Schleswig-Holstein related to the so called Economy for the Common Good (*Gemeinwohlökonomie, GWÖ*) and respective Common Good accounting. Several citizen/community wind farms in Schleswig-Holstein have already gained experience with GWÖ certification. Prof. Guthke emphasised that GWÖ certification could be a worthwhile attempt for more acceptance. He mentioned that there are also several approaches in Thuringia.
- R. Groß (Bundesgeschäftsstelle Energiegenossenschaften) emphasised that the energy cooperatives organized under the German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Federation (DGRV) have been active in this field for a long time.
- M. Krug (FUB) pointed out that the COME RES project plans to develop a self-assessment tool for energy communities (Sustainability Scorecard). It will help to assess the environmental, economic and social impacts of related business activities in relation to its members/shareholders and the local community. The development of this scorecard should explicitly take into account relevant corporate sustainability reporting initiatives, such as Common Good Balance Sheets.

Other Issues

- T. Janneck (Verbraucherzentrale Schleswig-Holstein) raised the question how to involve low-income households in RECs and how to deal with financial shortfalls. He wanted the project to find ways and solutions to bring together and realise community self-sufficiency and tenant power concepts.

Timetable and Possible Topics 2021

M. Krug (FU Berlin) presented the desk activities which are planned in 2021 and 2022. Two thematic workshops and roundtables with decision-makers from politics and administration are planned for March and June 2021, which will address the transposition of the recast Renewable Energy and the Internal Electricity Market Directives into national law. Participants' proposals for topics will also be taken into account. In 2022, stakeholder consultations and transfer workshops are planned in addition to thematic workshops (see presentation).

Ländertisch – Auftakttreffen 11.12.2020	1. Themenworkshop März 2021	2. Themenworkshop Juni 2021	2. Treffen des Ländertisches Nov/Dez 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kerngruppe des Ländertisches • Präsentation des Projekts • Vorstellung des Ländertisches • Rahmenbedingungen auf EU-Ebene und Bundesebene • Rahmenbedingungen in THÜ und SH • Hemmnisse, Problemfelder, Beispiele Guter Praxis • Eckpunkte/Inhalte für die Themenworkshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Größerer TeilnehmerInnen-Kreis • Präsenzveranstaltung? • Potenziale/ Hemmnisse für RECs • Weitere Themen? • Runder Tisch („policy lab“) mit EntscheidungsträgerInnen aus Politik und Verwaltung • Thema: Umsetzung der EU-Richtlinien und des Regulierungsrahmens für RECs in DE und anderen Ländern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Größerer TeilnehmerInnen-Kreis • Präsentation Zwischenergebnisse • Identifizierung von Beispielen Guter Praxis • Weitere Themen? • Runder Tisch („policy lab“) mit EntscheidungsträgerInnen aus Politik und Verwaltung • Thema: Umsetzung der EU-Richtlinien und des Regulierungsrahmens für RECs in DE und anderen Ländern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kerngruppe des Ländertisches • Präsentation Zwischenergebnisse • Präsentation der Positivbeispiele • Finanzierungsinstrumente /Geschäftsmodelle • Regulierungsrahmen für RECs in DE und anderen Ländern • Weitere Themen?

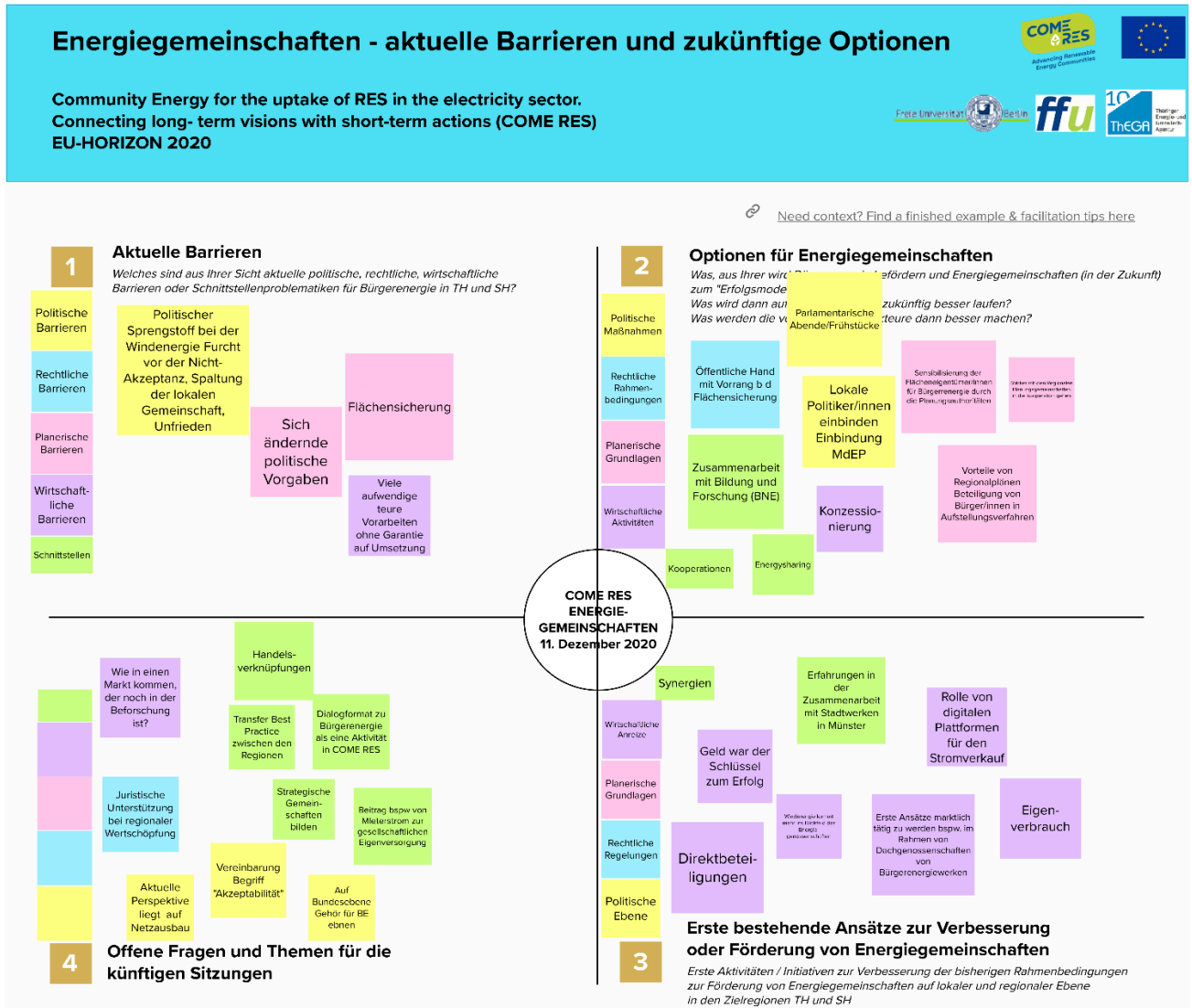
Suggestions for the Upcoming Events

- A. Behlig (Ministerium für Energiewende, Landwirtschaft, Umwelt, Natur und Digitalisierung des Landes Schleswig-Holstein) suggested involving the federal level, particularly the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) at the next events. It should be considered to link questions of citizen energy with questions of grid expansion, electricity market design and electricity trading.
- The federal states and regions play an important role in promoting energy communities. Although COME RES pays special attention to the implementation of the European legal framework, sufficient attention should be paid to the specificities of the individual *Länder* and regions.
- N. Knudsen (Bundesverband Windenergie Schleswig-Holstein) suggested to invite parliamentarians from Thuringia and Schleswig-Holstein and representatives of the European Committee of the Regions. She also proposed that the topic of the Economy for the Common Good may deserve special attention, e.g. in a dedicated thematic workshop. Possible formats: Parliamentary Evening, Parliamentary Breakfast.

Summary

- The project coordinator M.R. Di Nucci (FU Berlin) underlined the importance of the EU legislative package "Clean Energy for All Europeans" as a groundbreaking development. Citizen energy projects are more diverse today than ever before and are likely to continue to act as incubators for significant initiatives dealing with virtually all aspects of energy. However, the planned amendments to the Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG) are not very encouraging and it remains to be seen whether the implementation of RED II in Germany will turn out to be a lost opportunity. At the same time, there are promising signals at the level of the federal states.
- The kick-off meeting illustrated the role of social acceptance as a critical barrier to the energy transition. Citizen and renewable energy communities are an important instrument not only for decentralisation, but also for the democratisation of the energy system in Germany and elsewhere. An expert survey conducted in the frame of the WinWind project showed that the generation of local profits and income, local ownership, as well as information, transparency and participatory procedures were among the most important factors promoting acceptance.
- The kick-off event provided important clues with regard to the "heretical" question "What would have to happen where and how in order for energy communities to become a successful model in the future? What needs to be done better at which levels?"
- M.R. Di Nucci thanked the participants for their active participation, especially the representatives of the ministries in Thuringia and Schleswig-Holstein, Ms. Kießwetter, Ms. Behlig and Ms. Schulz-Gärtner, with whom the project coordinators had already a fruitful cooperation in the frame of WinWind. She hopes that all those present would continue to participate in the informal exchange in the future and contribute to the success of the project with their impulses. Finally, she thanked the team of ThEGA and Dr Bettina Knothe for their support.

Annex: Graphical summary of the discussion



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Project Consortium



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.