

Press release
For immediate release

Renovation, innovation and inspiration to make Europe's buildings more sustainable at Local Renewables 2011

Freiburg, Germany, October 31 2011 - Local governments are taking concrete steps to work towards the energy and climate goals of the European Commission's Europe 2020 Strategy, to create a win-win scenario - with local job creation, better quality housing and reduced CO₂ emissions as a direct result of energy efficient building renovation or passive house standard new constructions. These and many other key issues were explored at this year's Local Renewables Conference, which focused on green buildings and districts and ran from 27 – 28 October in Freiburg, Germany.

Dr. Dieter Wörner, Director of the City of Freiburg's Environment Protection Authority said, "We have chosen to talk about local concepts, because it is mainly cities and local organisations that have to find answers and make their contribution locally." Today up to 40 percent of all energy consumed in the European Union is used in buildings, accounting for 36 percent of Europe's CO₂ emissions.

Head of the Renewable Energy Unit at the European Commission's Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI), William Gillett, called for intensified local action to support the energy efficiency targets, where Europe is not yet on track. Buildings offer ideal scope for improved efficiency – from using appropriate design concepts to materials on the building envelope and inside the structure.

Gino Van Begin, Regional Director for ICLEI Europe, shared the organisation's perspective on its Local Renewables initiative, namely to explore the different local renewable energy sources in combination with energy efficiency in order to promote sustainability at the local and regional level. He stated that, "The most efficient way of climate protection is energy conservation and energy efficiency. Yet, it is also clear that we need to switch to sustainable, clean fuels to cover our reduced energy demand. Local renewables is the solution, offering local solutions for local demand. Freiburg and many other cities show how this can be done in a practical and effective way."

Effective technologies are available, while some of the main challenges lie with outlining and implementing effective policy to require and enforce improved energy efficiency. Cities need attractive financing schemes to implement sustainable building projects, that are easy to identify and apply for, without unnecessary administrative procedures.

Cities and towns across Europe are moving forward with the sustainable energy agenda, pushing the boundaries and exploring options to improve the value chain in their communities. The leaders are linking to key initiatives, such as the Covenant of Mayors and ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Campaign to reach critical milestones in the development of local energy action plans.

Background:

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is an international association of local governments and national and regional local government organisations. ICLEI currently has more than 1,200 members worldwide, of which 200 are in Europe. Founded in 1990, ICLEI provides technical guidance, training, and information services to build capacity, share knowledge, and support local governments in the implementation of sustainable development at the local level. The European Secretariat is based in Freiburg, an active ICLEI member.

The international series of **Local Renewables Conferences** started in Freiburg and focus on the local generation and use of renewable energy in combination with reduced energy demand. Exploring technology, policy, finances and stakeholder involvement, form the core of this initiative.

The **City of Freiburg** has been the host city of ICLEI Europe since 1992 and is well known internationally for its environmental approach and extensive use of solar energy and other renewable sources. The city is also globally recognised as a result of its urban transport and mobility policy. From early on Freiburg focused on environmental sustainability, photovoltaics and various biotechnologies, which has given the city decisive advantages as a business location in an international competitive environment. Freiburg is a participant in ICLEI's Local Renewables initiative and has been engaged in ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Campaign since 1993.

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