

Freiburg Outreach

“Local Renewables empower the energy revolution”

“We are ambitious enough to use 100% of our potential, not only 2/3rds. To achieve this we require and insist on national and European support”, says Freiburg’s Lord Mayor, Dr. Dieter Salomon.

(This demand is based on recent research conducted in the model city of Freiburg, indicating that two-thirds of the planned activities towards a sustainable energy future can be done within the local government’s responsibility, while one third is dependent on supportive national framework conditions.)

MOVING FROM VISION TO REALITY

100% sustainable energy is a reality in model communities

Sustainable energy means the combination of renewable energy sources (RES) with energy efficiency (EE) measures and energy conservation. The urban environment lends itself to this concept.

Buildings in need of renovation can be turned into low energy or passive buildings, unused roof tops can become mini-powerplants, new residential districts can be designed as passive housing, public bus fleets can be fuelled with bio-energy, the mountains of urban waste can be recycled and waste-to-energy solutions implemented.

The conference *Local Renewables Freiburg 2007*, held from 13-15 June 2007 in Freiburg i. Br., Germany, clearly illustrates the reality, the effectiveness and the incredible potential of sustainable energy solutions implemented at community level.

Local Renewables means strong involvement of the local community in the transition to sustainable energy.

Eight arguments for local community leaders to use Local Renewables

1. **Renewable energy sources are available and ready for use**, e.g. active and passive solar energy, wind – and hydro power, biomass, biogas, and geothermal energy.
2. Using local resources, to produce energy locally, establishes a foundation for a **decentralised secure energy supply, making communities more resilient** (less dependent on imported fossil fuels).
3. **Financial benefits – both saving money and generating an income over the short to long-term.** This can be done by using energy more efficiently, and by replacing increasingly expensive fossil fuels with sustainable energy solutions, selling (exporting) energy that is not locally required.
4. Implementing renewable energy **creates jobs and stimulates the local economy.**
5. Local Renewables give **impulse to urban development** and encourage technical and social **innovation.**
6. Moving away from fossil fuels will **reduce CO₂ emissions and support climate protection.**
7. **Local action is critical in achieving targets** - national and international - on sustainable energy and climate protection.
8. The **local community is key to reaching and involving various stakeholders**, including citizens, business, industry, local researchers, NGOs, etc.. – a driving force for innovation and change towards sustainable energy.

LOCAL ACTION IS CRUCIAL

Continuing process

The conference *Local Renewables Freiburg 2007*¹ is a follow up action to the Municipal Leaders Conference², an international municipal leaders conference that took place within the framework of the International Conference for Renewable Energies 2004 held in Bonn. Renewables 2004 looked at **policy and awareness-raising at the community action level**. *Local Renewables Freiburg 2007* moves further by addressing the **reality of local sustainable energy solutions and the framework conditions needed** to encourage widespread implementation.

Step up the pace - empower local governments

Sustainable energy means action at community level. In order to achieve the European RE targets it is clear that the tempo of action must increase and, that all actors must be empowered to act. All levels of government - from local to national, and beyond – have an important role to play in this transition to sustainable energy.

Local governments play a key role in promoting and implementing sustainable energy in their communities:

- They have a **political mandate** to govern and guide their communities;
- They **provide services and manage a wide range of municipal assets**, from buildings to infrastructure.
- They manage **planning and development** in their communities, and can direct this towards sustainability.
- They have **legislative, management and purchasing powers** that can be used to implement change in their own operations and in the wider community. In this regard they should also **lead by example**.
- They can play a powerful role in **raising public awareness and facilitating cooperation** of local actors.

Local governments need to be empowered to act effectively. There are restrictions and barriers, both from a legislative perspective (i.e. limited freedom to act) and from a practical perspective (i.e. lack of financial resources versus increasing roles and public expectations for guidance and action).

A SUPPORT FRAMEWORK IS NEEDED

An extensive framework is needed to encourage and facilitate sustainable energy implementation at community level.

At a national level this means:

- Levelling the energy playing field - give priority support to renewable energy sources (i.e. direct and indirect subsidies should be provided for RES instead of fossil fuels and nuclear energy).
- Adopting supportive legislation (e.g. national feed-in law for all RES against a fair fee for sustainable energy that promote healthy competition and innovation).
- Improve additional framework conditions: National guidance and enforcement that supports the implementation of RE implementation in the waste, transport, energy and building sectors, e.g. national construction criteria or permission for waste-to-energy.
- Providing financial incentives such as initiative or project grants, tax breaks to award action or tax burdens to penalise non-action. Involving the banking and financing sector in support for implementation action.
- Investment into research and development (R&D) to encourage further technology and product development for effective application,
- Supporting capacity building and training of diverse actors that are needed to guide, manage and implement the transition (from national, provincial and local decision-makers / politicians / officials – both from ruling and opposition parties - to urban planners, architects, engineers, etc.).
- Initiating a national dialogue to stimulate stakeholder involvement (public, businesses, industry, etc.), identify needs and gaps, and drive forward the transition towards sustainable energy.

¹ <http://www.local-renewables2007.org>

² <http://www.renewables2004.de/en/related/local.asp>

At the EU level this means:

- Recognising the crucial role of local and regional governments in the field of sustainable energy.
- Adjusting European framework conditions so that these encourage and support decentralised local action for sustainable energy.
- Requesting and encouraging national governments to act in a responsible manner.
- Allocating funds, or encouraging governments and funding organisations, to allocate funds for extensive replication actions – from large to small – that contribute to achieving EU energy targets.
- Guiding by example, promoting sustainable energy in all EU buildings, transport, waste and purchasing actions.

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