



# Investors, drivers, troublemakers – citizens and the local powers of the Energiewende

A bottom-up, decentralised, and citizen-owned energy system – myth or reality? A stock-taking visit to Rhineland-Palatinate

**Media study tour for journalists**  
organised by the Clean Energy Wire

**22- 24 April 2018, Mainz – Wörrstadt – Hunsrück, Germany**

Geierlay Bridge is one of the world's longest rope bridges. The municipality-owned tourist attraction in Mörsdorf was paid for with income from leasing the village's land to a wind park *\_Foto: Ingo Börsch*



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*„The money of the village for the village.“*

*Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen, 1818-1888*

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## The bright vision of a bottom-up energy revolution: Where exactly is it between myth and reality?

From its onset, the Energiewende has gripped large parts of German society: thousands of local initiatives, citizen cooperatives, and business models have sprung up across the country. For several years, the bright vision of the anti-nuclear movement that had sparked the Energiewende seemed to be within reach: a citizen-owned, highly decentralised energy system, driving rural growth and community-building.

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### **Citizens own one third of Germany's renewables capacity**

*In 2016, private citizens owned 31.5 percent of all installed renewable power capacity in Germany, making them the most important investors in the sector ahead of energy companies (15.7 percent), developers (14.4 percent), farmers (10.5 percent), and funds/banks (13.4 percent). 'Private citizens' refers to individuals who, for instance, install their own solar PV rooftop panels, as well as to energy cooperatives.*

*Source: Renewable Energies Agency AEE/Clean Energy Wire, 02 Feb. 2018*

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Citizens' involvement has also started to turn the old structures in the energy market upside down, leaving the big utilities with unexpected competition. Through investments by citizens, the energy market has grown from being virtually monopolistic to being fragmented and highly decentralised. This dramatic shift to a decentralised energy system has taken place within the framework of the Renewable Energy Act (EEG). Small investors were given an incentive through feed-in tariffs to implement new renewable power installations, guaranteed for 20 years.

But now the project enters a new phase as today over a third of the electricity used in Germany comes from renewable sources. Revised rules governing the payment for renewable power, as well as the construction of vital new infrastructure, have triggered uncertainty over who will shoulder the social and financial costs of the Energiewende.

## Ever more complex regulations and 'not in my backyard' protests are challenging the once cosy idea of citizen-owned energy

For small-scale energy producers – private households, farmers, and cooperatives –, whose production has so far been seen as the backbone of clean energy in Germany, the new regulations



have led to uncertainty over their future investment decisions. This has been aggravated by a wave of protests by local citizens against new wind parks and new power lines all over the country. These protests are readily embraced by the emerging anti-establishment, right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

**Citizens protest against wind parks in the Odenwald region in the state of Hesse** Foto: Vernunftkraft Odenwald e.V.

The Energiewende also plays an important role Against the backdrop of a rapidly ageing population and a debate over an increasing urban-rural divide. Its proponents argue that decentralised renewable energy facilities mean additional tax revenues and new jobs for rural municipalities. This is countered by protests against big changes of the natural scenery and nature conversation issues.

### Neuerkirch-Külz: Kicking out the oil burners

The municipality of Neuerkirch-Külz has used the income from leasing local land to windparks to build a combined solar thermal and biomass district heat plant. A local heating network is supplying 150 households with heat generated from regionally supplied wood waste and solar energy. Every household willing to switch from conventional oil-fired heating to the communal heating system receives a grant of 4,000 euro, which typically covers the total investment cost. Since the project's launch in 2013, all but five of the municipality's 105 households have switched off their oil burners.

Source: *Energie und Management*, 1 April 2017

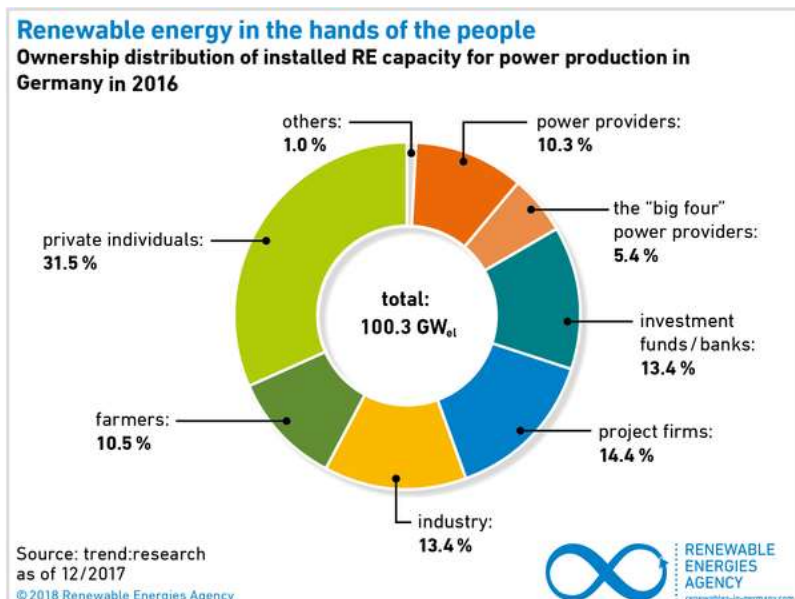
## We are inviting international journalists to join us in taking stock:

- **Is the vision of a citizen-driven, locally owned, decentralised Energiewende alive and thriving – or is the momentum behind it ebbing away in a mixture of public protests, corporate interests, and ever more complex energy market regulations?**
- **What models exist for local investment and citizen engagement in the Energiewende? How do these fare in the face of ever tighter competition from energy market incumbents, who strive to turn renewables into a big business?**
- **Can a balance be found between new investments in wind power and in solar parks?**

Our joint stock-taking exercise will take us to the West German heartland of Rhineland-Palatinate. This predominantly rural German federal state is a forerunner in citizen involvement and in setting ambitious renewables targets.

While the new government coalition at the federal level has just agreed to generate 65% of the electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2030, Rhineland-Palatinate wants this figure to reach 100% by 2030.

During our three-day study tour, we will talk to leading energy experts, local mayors, representatives of energy cooperatives, protesters and policymakers.



# The programme – an overview

## Sunday, 22 April

Opening session. Meetings with Professor **Peter Heck**, regional planner and renewable energy expert: “The Energiewende means spending our money in regional business circles, rather than sustaining the profit of international oil giants”; and with **Thomas Pensel**, head of the Rhineland-Palatinate State Energy Agency: “In Germany, Rhineland-Palatinate is the forerunner in fulfilling our commitments under the Paris Agreement”.

## Monday, 23 April

Meetings with two **citizen energy cooperatives**; the mayor of Wörrstadt local authority; and onsite visits to citizen-owned **renewable energy installations**.

Visit to **Juwi**, one of Germany’s leading **wind power developers**. Background meeting with State Secretary **Thomas Griese** (Greens): “We have managed to strike a balance between strong renewables expansion, citizens’ concerns, and nature conservation.”- **Panel debate** with members of parliament, and representatives of anti-wind power protest groups and nature conservation groups.

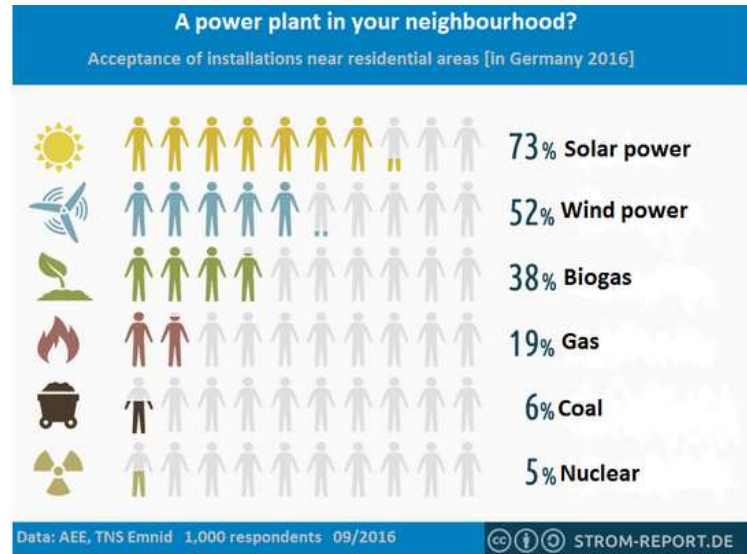
## Tuesday, 24 April

**Tour of the Rhein-Hunsrueck district**, which in 2017 generated from local renewable sources approximately three times the amount of electricity it consumed. Meetings are scheduled with mayors; District Chief Executive **Marlon Bröhr** (CDU); and **Bertram Fleck**, CDU veteran and champion of linking energy policy with rural development: “Twenty years ago we had practically no energy generation in our region. Twenty years on, renewable energy investments worked like a jackpot for local businesses.” Meeting with the energy expert of the regional **Consumer Association**: Are low-income households burdened too heavily with high electricity costs?

## Fighting windmills: When growth hits resistance

Wind turbines have become one of the most visible components of the Energiewende, and they increasingly shape the landscape all over the country. But Germany's most important green energy source does not have supporters only – numerous citizen initiatives have been formed in recent years, questioning the turbines' effects on human health, wildlife and the natural environment. Acceptance of the technology tends to increase with exposure, but opposition is already seeping into the political discourse.

For more info: See the Clean Energy Wire fact sheet '[Fighting windmills: When growth hits resistance](#)'



# Content

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Bumper sticker for the 2017 Bundestag election: "Don't vote for wind power supporters"

Source: [windkraftgegner.de](http://windkraftgegner.de)

# The programme in detail: Who? What? When?

## Sunday, 22 April 2018

*Individual arrival of participants in Bad Kreuznach*

15.00 *Individual check-in at hotel (optional): Hotel Caravelle, Weinkauffstraße 1  
55543 Bad Kreuznach*

16.00 **Local investment, rural areas, the role of renewables in strengthening regional purchasing power and the Energiewende in Rhineland-Palatinate**

Kick-starting the media study tour with



- **Prof. Dr. Peter Heck**, managing director, Institute for Applied Material Flow Management, Trier University of Applied Sciences
- **Thomas Pensel**, executive director, Rhineland-Palatinate Energy Agency (Energieagentur Rheinland-Pfalz)

*Location: Hotel Caravelle*

18.00 *Transfer to dinner location (10-minute walk, meeting point: hotel lobby)  
Dinner*

**Welcome, outline of the programme, getting to know each other**

**Sven Egenter**, executive director, Clean Energy Wire

**Carel C. Mohn**, director media programmes, Clean Energy Wire

*Location: Ristorante da Graziella, Im Oranienpark 2, 55543 Bad Kreuznach*

*Overnight stay at Hotel Caravelle, Bad Kreuznach*

## Monday, 23 April 2018

8.00 *Bus transfer from hotel to Wörrstadt*

9.00 **One out of 831: The SOLIX energy cooperative. Citizen energy cooperatives, their interaction with local governments and the future of a business model**

Presentation and discussion with:




- **Dr. Petra Gruner-Bauer**, chair, SOLIX energy cooperative (Solix ENERGIE aus Bürgerhand Rheinhessen eG)
- **Marcus Conrad**, mayor of Wörrstadt municipality

*Location: Municipality of Wörrstadt, Zum Römergrund 2-6, 55286 Wörrstadt*

- 11.00 **How much is building windparks and PV plants still a local business? How juwi AG, a small project developer from the German hinterland, became a global player**  
 Meeting with:  

  - **Matthias Willenbacher**, founder and co-owner of juwi AG*Location: juwi AG, Energie-Allee 1, 55286 Wörrstadt*  
  
*Lunch*
- 13.00 *Bus transfer from Wörrstadt to Mainz*
- 14.00 **Rhineland-Palatinate: The state government's role in finding the balance between being a clean energy frontrunner state, rebuilding the energy infrastructure and anti-wind power citizen protests**  
 Meeting with:  

  - **Thomas Griese**, state secretary (Green Party), Rhineland-Palatinate State Ministry for Energy and the Environment*Location: Ministerium für Umwelt, Energie, Ernährung und Forsten, Kaiser-Friedrich-Straße 1, 55116 Mainz*  
  
*Bus transfer from Mainz to Groß-Winternheim with stopover at Mainz police station*
- 15.30 **From village to city, from feed-in tariffs to complex regulation: How can energy cooperatives survive in a fast-changing business environment? The UrStrom energy cooperative**  
 Meeting with:  

  - **Dr. Verena Ruppert**, chair, State Network of Citizen Energy Cooperatives (Landesnetzwerk)
  - **Klaus Grieger, Dr. Gerhard Breuel, Christoph Albuschkat**, UrStrom energy cooperative (UrStrom BürgerEnergieGenossenschaft Mainz eG)

On-site visits to PV plants at the Rhineland-Palatinate Police in Mainz and at the Huster Winery (Weingut Huster)  
*Locations: Mainz police station (Dekan-Laist-Straße 7, Mainz-Hechtsheim); Weingut Huster, Rosenstr. 13 D-55218 Ingelheim-Großwinternheim*

18.00 *Dinner at Weingut Huster*

19.00 **New energies, new income, new conflicts: How the Energiewende is shaping politics in the State of Rhineland-Palatinate. The perspectives of government and opposition, nature conservation groups and citizen activists**  
 Panel debate with:  

  - **Nina Klinkel**, member of the Rhineland-Palatinate state parliament (SPD), member of the energy and environment committee
  - **Cosima Lindemann**, senior expert for biodiversity and nature conservation at NABU Rhineland-Palatinate (Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union)
  - **Dr. Björn Peters**, Bündnis Energiewende für Mensch und Natur e.V. (anti-wind power citizen alliance)
  - **Michael Wäschenbach**, energy policy speaker for the CDU group in the Rhineland-Palatinate state parliament
  - **Moderator:** Volker Angres, ZDF National Public Television*Location: Weingut Huster, bus transfer and overnight stay in Bad Kreuznach*



## Tuesday, 24 April 2018

8.15 *Bus transfer to Neuerkirch*

9.30 **From energy importer to energy exporter: An overview of regional climate policy initiatives and energy investments in the Rhein-Hunsrueck District from 1999 to today**

Meeting with local and regional policy-makers:



- **Volker Wichter**, greeting from mayor of Neuerkirch
- **Bernd Ries**, greeting from mayor of Kütz
- **Dr. Marlon Bröhr**, greeting from chief executive of the Rhein-Hunsrueck district

presentations from:

- **Bertram Fleck** former chief executive of the Rhein-Hunsrueck District
- **Carmen Strüh**, regional manager energy consulting, consumer advice center of Rhineland-Palatinate
- **Frank-Michael Uhle**, climate policy commissioner of the Rhein-Hunsrueck District

*Location: Gemeindehaus Neuerkirch (community hall), Hauptstraße 8, 55471 Neuerkirch*

11.00 **On-site inspections of communal clean energy projects:**



- Wood waste, solar power and underground pipes: The local heating system in Neuerkirch. How it works and how it came into being
- Local, zero-pollution grocery shopping: The communal cargo e-bike

*Location: Kützbachstraße 15, Neuerkirch*

12.00 *Bus transfer to Klosterkumbd*

12.30 *Lunch at Restaurant Birkenhof, location: Birkenweg 1, 55469 Klosterkumbd*

14.00 *Bus transfer to Mörsdorf*

14.30 **Bringing international tourists to the German hinterland: How the idea of building a Nepali-style suspension bridge between Mörsdorf and Sosberg was born in a citizen workshop**

Meeting with



- **Marcus Kirchhoff**, mayor of Mörsdorf
- **Ingo Börsch**, former member of the local council

*Location: Visitors Centre Geierlay (Besucherzentrum), Mörsdorf*

**Visit to the Geierlay suspension bridge**

16.45 *Joint bus transfer to Frankfurt am Main Airport/Airport train station*

18.30 *Arrival at Frankfurt am Main Airport/Airport train station  
official end of the programme*

*Individual departure of participants (optional overnight stay at Meininger Hotel Frankfurt am Main Airport, Bessie-Coleman-Straße 11, 60549 Frankfurt am Main)*

## From A to I: Background info on the programme

A

The **Institute for Applied Material Flow Management (IfaS)** at Trier University of Applied Sciences is a higher research institute that aims to promote the sustainable optimisation of regional and operational material flows in specific and practice-oriented projects worldwide. Besides supervising national and international projects in close cooperation with municipalities, local authorities, ministries, businesses, and other scientific institutions, IfaS offers three English language Masters degree programmes in material flow management. The interdisciplinary team of more than 30 staff focuses on the analysis of the current situation, the creation of networks, the innovative combination of new and proven technologies, and the development of innovative financial mechanisms.

Since 2001, **Prof. Dr. Peter Heck** has been heading the Institute for Applied Material Flow Management as managing director. In 1999, he was appointed professor for material flow management, environmental policy, sustainable development, international trade, and renewable energies. During his career, he built up extensive experience as an environmental and energy consultant for the German city of Dormagen and the municipality of Wallerfangen. He also worked for the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the State Environmental Protection Agency of China (SEPA). Prof. Dr. Peter Heck holds a diploma and a PhD degree in geography from Saarland University in Germany. He also participated in a one-year research scholarship programme in Taiwan.

- IfaS' official website (in English and German):  
<http://www.stoffstrom.org/en/>

The **Rhineland-Palatinate Energy Agency** is a state-owned service provider supporting municipalities, public institutions, businesses, and citizens in their energy transition and climate protection efforts since 2012. Funded by the State Ministry of Environment, Energy, Food and Forestry, the 59 staff not only inform the public but also initiate and accompany renewable energy, energy efficiency, and mobility projects. The agency aims to contribute to tackling climate change, while fostering sustainable development and regional development.

**Thomas Pensel** became executive director of the Rhineland-Palatinate Energy Agency in 2015. Prior to that, for 30 years he worked in the environment department of the city of Mainz as climate protection coordinator, as well as an environment and energy consultant. He graduated with a diploma in biology from the University of Hohenheim and studied environmental science in France, Belgium, and Germany as part of a joint European diploma programme.

- Energy agency's official website (in English and German):  
<https://www.energieagentur.rlp.de/>

## B

**Dr. Petra Gruner-Bauer** is a founding member and chair of the **SOLIX** energy cooperative (*SOLIX ENERGIE aus Bürgerhand Rheinhessen eG*) based in the municipality of Wörrstadt. In 2007 and 2010, solar panels were installed on the roofs of Wörrstadt's municipal buildings, and their success encouraged Gruner-Bauer and seven other founding members to establish SOLIX. Their aim is to promote the energy transition by enabling citizens, regional companies, and institutions to actively partake in, and benefit from, cooperatively owned decentralised renewable energy generation. By the end of 2016, the cooperative had 115 individual members, as well as four regional shareholders, such as the Lahr municipality and local companies. SOLIX owns and operates a 50 kilowatt photovoltaic plant, as well as a 3 megawatt wind turbine that supplies electricity to around 5,000 people per year. It also holds shares in a repowering project of a windpark in Framersheim. The cooperative currently accepts members who acquire shares worth a minimum of 1,000 and up to 50,000 euros. Under German law, all members of a cooperative have equal voting rights regardless of their financial contribution. The total volume of shares was more than one million euros at the end of 2016.

- ➔ SOLIX's official website (in German):  
<http://www.solix-energie.de/>

**Marcus Conrad** has been the mayor of **Wörrstadt** municipality since 2003. Under his tenure for the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party, the municipality of 29,000 inhabitants became one of eight pilot communities to participate in the statewide "Projekt21", which was funded by the former State Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Consumer Protection. During this project, local authorities collected data on their respective communities' sustainability, developed site-specific action programmes, and implemented them. In line with Wörrstadt's efforts towards a sustainable future, in 2012 it became the first municipality in Germany to produce and consume 100 percent of its own electricity from renewable energy sources – a goal that formerly had been set to be achieved by 2017. Furthermore, the community's energy and climate protection efforts earned Wörrstadt the European Energy Award (EEA) along with the title of Germany's first European energy and climate protection municipality.

Conrad joined Junge Union, the conservative CDU and Christian Social Union parties' youth organisation, in the late 1980s, and has since then been active in the local CDU branch in a variety of different positions. Throughout his training and professional career, the graduate of public administration and reserve lieutenant of the German Federal Army has been serving various public institutions, including a term at the State Ministry of Economic Affairs, Transport, Agriculture and Viniculture.

- ➔ Wörrstadt municipality's official website (in German):  
<http://www.vgwoerrstadt.de/>
- ➔ Marcus Conrad's official website (in German):  
<https://www.markus-conrad.de/>

C

**Matthias Willenbacher** is co-founder and co-owner of project developer and engineering, procurement, and construction service provider **juwi AG**. Founded in 1996 and based in Rhineland-Palatinate, juwi maintains a strong presence and ties to the region, despite having made itself at home in the international renewable energy business. The company, whose activities are mainly focused on national and international solar and onshore wind energy projects, employs around 1,000 people worldwide. To date, juwi has installed some 950 wind turbines with a total capacity of around 2,100 megawatts at more than 150 sites, according to its website. In the solar segment, more than 1,600 projects with a total capacity of around 2,300 megawatts have been designed and constructed. Combined, these systems produce around 7.7 billion kilowatt hours of electricity per year, equalling the annual demand of around 2.5 million German households. Since the end of 2014, the Mannheim-based utility MVV Energie AG has been the company's majority shareholder with 63 percent. The remaining shares are owned by Frema GmbH & Co. KG, a joint holding company of juwi's co-founders Fred Jung and Matthias Willenbacher. Over the past 20 years, juwi's investment volume has reached 8.6 billion euros.

Having made the juwi group a successful global player, Matthias Willenbacher has appeared in numerous documentaries, interviews, and feature stories. Furthermore, he authored the bestselling book *"Mein unmoralisches Angebot an die Kanzlerin. Denn die Energiewende darf nicht scheitern"* (*My indecent proposal to the Chancellor [Merkel]. Because the energy transition must not fail*), identifying the cornerstones of a new energy system based on one hundred percent renewable sources. The trained physicist realised wind power's great renewable energy potential in 1995. One year later, in 1996, he and co-founder Fred Jung, an agricultural economist, established juwi, and in the very same year they built the first wind turbine, worth one million Deutsche mark, on the farmland of Willenbacher's parents.

- ➡ Juwi AG's official website (in English and German)  
<http://www.juwi.de/>
- ➡ Matthias Willenbacher's personal website (in German):  
<http://www.matthias-willenbacher.de/>

D

**Thomas Griese** (Green Party) has been state secretary at the Rhineland-Palatinate State Ministry of Environment, Energy, Food and Forestry since 2011. Prior to that, he was state secretary at the State Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Consumer Protection in his home state of North Rhine-Westphalia from 1995 to 2005. In between his terms as state secretary, the trained lawyer served as an attorney at the (higher) labour courts in Cologne and Aachen. He wrote his PhD thesis on data protection and labour law.

In 2014, the former state government of the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Green Party ratified the Rhineland-Palatinate State Climate Protection Law, which codified the state's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, and by between 90 and 100 percent by 2050. So far, emissions have decreased by 5 percent only compared to 1990 levels. While the former state government had also aimed to achieve 100 percent renewables-based electricity consumption by 2030, the current state government - Social Democrats (SPD), Greens, and economic liberal Free Democrats (FDP) - stresses the need for further renewable energy expansion, but without giving specific targets.

Rhineland-Palatinate's energy system remains highly dependent on fossil fuels, mostly mineral oil and natural gas, which accounted for 41 and 38 percent, respectively, of the state's primary energy consumption in 2015. Renewable energies only made up around 12 percent of primary energy consumed – close to the federal average. Natural gas also plays an important role in the electricity sector, as it is predominantly used in combined heat and power plants, and provided almost 50 percent of the electricity produced (2016). However, the other half of the electricity generated (45 percent in 2016), came from renewable sources, mainly wind power, which is significantly above the German average of 33 percent (2017).

While Rhineland-Palatinate is the leading state in southern Germany in terms of wind power use relative to its potential and also in district heating and in implementing renewables in the heating sector, other sectors lag behind in federal comparison, reveals a recent study published jointly by the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin), the Centre for Solar Energy and Hydrogen Research Baden-Wuerttemberg (ZSW), and the Renewable Energies Agency (AEE). Since 2008, they have been regularly evaluating all 16 federal states' efforts and successes in implementing renewable energies, as well as in fostering economic and technological change using a few dozen parameters. Despite the positive developments mentioned above, the latest 2017 ranking lists Rhineland-Palatinate 9<sup>th</sup> overall. The authors of the study see untapped potential in solar energy and biomass, as well as a significant deficit when it comes to igniting technological and economic change. Compared to other federal states, Rhineland-Palatinate invests less on average in renewable energies-related R&D, and is less successful in creating favourable conditions for the renewables industry in the region, according to the joint DIW, ZSW and AEE study published in November 2017.

- ➔ Thomas Griese's personal website (in German):  
<http://www.thomas-griese-aachen.de/>
- ➔ Summary of Rhineland-Palatinate's State Climate Protection Law and link to full document (in German):  
<https://mueef.rlp.de/en/themen/klima-und-ressourcenschutz/klimaschutz/klimaschutzgesetz/>
- ➔ Publications, data, maps, and further information on energy in Rhineland-Palatinate (in German):  
<http://www.statistik.rlp.de/de/wirtschaftsbereiche/energie/>
- ➔ Further information on the comparative study of renewable energies in Germany's federal states by DIW, ZSW and AEE (in German):  
<https://www.foederal-erneuerbar.de/auf-einen-blick-detailseite/items/bundeslaendervergleich-ee-2017>

Summary of the study's findings regarding Rhineland-Palatinate (in German):  
[https://www.foederal-erneuerbar.de/tl\\_files/aee/Bundeslaendervergleich\\_2017/Laenderzusammenfassung\\_n/AEE\\_BL-Vergleich\\_2017\\_Rheinland-Pfalz\\_nov17.pdf](https://www.foederal-erneuerbar.de/tl_files/aee/Bundeslaendervergleich_2017/Laenderzusammenfassung_n/AEE_BL-Vergleich_2017_Rheinland-Pfalz_nov17.pdf)

## E

**Dr. Verena Ruppert** is chair of the Mainz-based **State Network of Citizen Energy Cooperatives Rhineland-Palatinate**. She is also a founding and board member of the citizen energy cooperative **UrStrom eG** (see below). Since 2012, the network has been facilitating knowledge exchange among member energy cooperatives, and bundling their interests to promote their common goals. The continuing education of their members and building networks with other energy cooperatives and actors of the energy transition across federal state borders are also part of the state network's aims and activities. Currently, 20 out of its 24 members are citizen energy cooperatives from Rhineland-Palatinate.

- ➔ State network's official website (in German)  
<http://www.laneg.de/laneg-ev/ziele-und-aufgaben/>

In contrast to the typical understanding one might have of renewable citizen energy being predominantly produced in the rural countryside, the urban-based **UrStrom eG** is an example for the potential of citizen-owned renewable energy generation in cities and their suburbs.

UrStrom, an initiative of the citizens of Mainz and the surrounding area, was founded in September 2010 with the aim of making a contribution to the energy transition in Mainz and the Rheinhessen/Nahe region. Currently, the cooperative operates eleven photovoltaic systems in the region, producing solar power for around one hundred four-person households. The solar panels are mounted on the roofs of public and industrial buildings. Around half of UrStrom's systems were built in the urban area. In February 2018, the 200<sup>th</sup> cooperative member joined the initiative. At their monthly meetings in the UrStromClub, the members exchange views on new projects and current developments in the field of renewable energies.

UrStrom is not only a founding member of the State Network of Citizen Energy Cooperatives, but has also initiated the **Bürgerwerke eG** together with nine other citizen energy cooperatives. **Bürgerwerke** promotes and manages the sale and direct retailing of citizen-owned and generated renewable electricity to citizens. Their product, "UrStromPure," offers 100 percent renewable electricity to residential and commercial customers at a competitive price.

IT consultant **Klaus Grieger** is UrStrom's chair of public relations, business development and marketing. **Dr. Gerhard Breul** is a trained mechanical engineer and chair of UrStromPure. Geographer and founding member **Christoph Albuschkat** is responsible for UrStrom's member support and public relations.

- ➔ UrStrom eG's official website (in German):  
<http://www.urstrom.com/>
- ➔ Real-time data and reports on UrStrom's renewable electricity production (in German):  
<http://www.urstrom-projektspiegel.com/>
- ➔ **Bürgerwerke eG's** official website (in German):  
<https://buengerwerke.de/>

## F

**Nina Klinkel** is a member of the Rhineland-Palatinate state parliament (Social Democratic Party, SPD) and a member of its environment, energy and food committee. Mainz native Klinkel studied history and political science and worked as a medical historian before becoming a scholar of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (affiliated with the SPD).

The SPD's state parliamentary group has been leading Rhineland-Palatinate's state governments since 1991 – after 44 years of a conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) reign. Under the current state coalition government of the Social Democrats, the Green Party and the economic liberal FDP, as well as the preceding coalition of the SPD and the Greens, Rhineland-Palatinate has tripled its wind power capacity and increased its photovoltaic power capacity sixfold since 2009. Although it is now the leading federal state in southern Germany in terms of wind power installed relative to its potential, the expansion of wind power has elicited considerable public debate and criticism of Klinkel's party from the opposition parties, nature conservation organisations, and citizen activists. They argue that the state government's policies have enabled the uncoordinated, fast-paced development of wind power at the expense of nature protection, in a way detrimental to the communities living adjacent to wind turbines, and contrary to the principles of overall energy supply management and energy economics.

- ➔ Nina Klinkel's official website (in German):  
<https://www.nina-klinkel.de/landtag/>
- ➔ SPD's state parliamentary group in Rhineland-Palatinate (in German):  
<http://www.spdfraktion-rlp.de/>
- ➔ Latest update of the State Development Plan – Renewable Energies (in German):  
[https://mdi.rlp.de/fileadmin/isim/Unsere\\_Themen/Landesplanung\\_Abteilung\\_7/Landesplanung/1\\_Teilfortschreibung\\_LEP\\_IV\\_-\\_Erneuerbare\\_Energien.pdf](https://mdi.rlp.de/fileadmin/isim/Unsere_Themen/Landesplanung_Abteilung_7/Landesplanung/1_Teilfortschreibung_LEP_IV_-_Erneuerbare_Energien.pdf)

The **Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU)** is one of Germany's largest environment groups with over 520,000 members and sponsors. Since its launch in 1899, it has been committed to the protection of threatened species and habitats, climate protection, and energy policy. Internationally, it is the German national member of BirdLife International. NABU generally promotes renewables like wind and solar energy, but is often critical of projects which they see as a threat to birds and bats, or otherwise not ecologically sound.

**Cosima Lindemann** is a senior expert in biodiversity and nature conservation at NABU Rhineland-Palatinate.

A recently concluded lawsuit filed by the Rhineland-Palatinate branch of NABU might have set an important precedent for future wind development.

In 2014, NABU Rhineland-Palatinate filed lawsuits against the construction of three wind turbines in the county of Birkenfeld, because they had discovered that two red kite pairs lived within a 1.5 kilometre radius of the wind turbines. The red kite is a threatened bird species, included in Annex 1 of the EU's Birds Directive, and thus member states must designate so-called Special Protection Areas to its habitat. While local authorities and the wind turbine operator tried to knowingly disregard the matter and fight NABU's lawsuit, in November 2017 the higher administrative court annulled/repealed the approval of the wind turbines.

Perhaps more importantly, the higher administrative court furthermore concluded that local

authorities and wind farm operators cannot concede their responsibility, even if protected species are only found after an initial authorisation procedure had been completed. To what extent this recent ruling might affect current, as well as future, wind power projects in the region remains to be seen.

- ➔ NABU Rhineland-Palatinate's official website (in English and German):  
<https://rlp.nabu.de/>
- ➔ NABU Rhineland-Palatinate's positions on wind power (in German):  
<https://rlp.nabu.de/umwelt-und-ressourcen/energie/windenergie/index.html>
- ➔ NABU Rhineland-Palatinate's press release regarding the court ruling acceding their lawsuit against three wind turbines in the county of Birkenfeld (in German):  
[https://rlp.nabu.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/index.php?popup=true&show=2252&d b=presseservice\\_rlp](https://rlp.nabu.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/index.php?popup=true&show=2252&d b=presseservice_rlp)
- ➔ Information on the European Union's Birds Directive on the protection of threatened wild bird species (in English):  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm)

**Dr. Björn Peters** is advisor to the board of the citizen alliance **Bündnis Energiewende für Mensch und Natur e.V.** He also heads the department of energy policy at the German Employers Association (which represents 25,000 out of a total number of 6.93 million companies in Germany), and is founder of a corporate and political consultancy.

The citizen alliance represents 42 citizen initiatives, most of which are opposed to wind power. Their 9,000-plus members support a "controlled and moderate energy transition" in Rhineland-Palatinate and the neighbouring state of Saarland, advocating the "ecologically, socially, technically, and economically sound expansion of renewable energies that takes into account the protection of humans, nature, and living things, as well as the cultural landscapes". According to their position paper, the citizen alliance demands that a minimum distance of two kilometres be set between the wind turbines and the adjacent residential buildings. Furthermore, it argues that nature reserves, as well as bird migration corridors and other pristine landscapes, should be excluded from wind power expansion. It also calls for independent expert surveys of possible sites for wind power generation, and argues for the need to embed the expansion into overarching regional strategies, - and, by doing so, take away the planning authority from local government institutions.

- ➔ The citizen alliance's official website (in German):  
<http://www.energie-mensch-natur.de/>

**Michael Wäschenbach** is energy policy speaker for the CDU group in the Rhineland-Palatinate state parliament. Representing the largest opposition group in the state legislature, Wäschenbach and his CDU colleagues have been outspoken critics of the state government's renewable energy policies. Their main point of criticism is that the development of wind power needs stronger regulation, and responsibility must rest with the higher (regional) planning authorities rather than with the municipal institutions. They see an urgent need for better coordination and integration of local renewable energy development projects.



They argue that, as a consequence of a too speedy and arbitrarily supported wind power development by the local government, household power prices and (transmission) grid management have been negatively affected, and the concerns of, and impacts on, the environment and the citizens have been neglected. The CDU, together with NABU, other nature protection organisations, and citizen initiatives, has pushed for exempting nature reserves and other ecologically important (forest) habitats from wind power expansion, while also increasing the minimum distance between residential areas and wind turbines.

Wäschenbach joined the CDU in 2004, and has been a member of its state parliament group since 2012. Previously, he held different positions at the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz) for more than 25 years, where he also completed his higher education with a diploma in public administration.

- ➔ Michael Wäschenbach's official website (in German):  
<http://www.michael-waeschbach.de/>
- ➔ CDU's state parliamentary group in Rhineland-Palatinate (in German):  
<http://www.cdu-fraktion-rlp.de/>


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The **Rhein-Hunsrueck District** lies in the geographic centre of Rhineland-Palatinate. Home to around 100,000 citizens, this predominantly rural district and has a relatively low population density (103 citizens per sq. kilometre; national average: 231). In terms of combining climate protection and the development of renewable energies with regional value creation, the Rhein-Hunsrueck District has become an award-winning front-runner at state, national, and European levels. Its efforts originated with the energy management of municipal buildings in 1999. Twelve years later, in 2011, the district passed a climate protection act that set ambitious climate and energy targets. By 2050, it aims to reduce gross energy consumption by 40 percent, halve the energy consumption of buildings, and replace the equivalent of 210 million litres of oil with locally generated decentralised renewable energy. While Rhein-Hunsrueck used to be dependent on energy imports worth 290 million euros in 2011, by 2050 it wants to locally produce - and consume - energy worth 250 million euros, and thereby to adhere to the “money of the village for the village” maxim (attributed to cooperative pioneer Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen, 1818-1888).

In 2010, about 43 percent of the electricity consumed in the district came from renewable sources. Just five years later, after the adoption of the Climate Protection Act, Rhein-Hunsrueck became an energy-exporter, and produced 270 percent of its own electricity consumption. By the end of 2018, this figure is expected to reach 300 percent, and Rhein-Hunsrueck is projected to become one of the first districts in Germany to be carbon neutral across all sectors. By 2015, around 100 million euros had been induced to the local economy for the construction of renewable energy plants, which now create a regional value of more than 40 million euros per year.

The municipality of **Neuerkirch-Külz** provides a good example for joint local action by citizens and municipalities following the district's goals: using income from leasing local land to windpark operators, the municipality built a combined solar thermal and biomass district heating plant and network that supplies 150 households with heat from regional wood waste and solar energy – and by doing so, locally, it already fulfils Germany's 2050 targets for the heating sector today.

The success story of the Rhein-Hunsrueck District offers an example of how energy policy can be linked with rural development for the benefit of both the citizens, the environment, and the local economy – driven, in this instance, by politicians of the centre-right CDU party.

**Volker Wichter** is the mayor of Neuerkirch.

**Aloys Schneider** is the retired mayor of Külz.

**Dr. Marlon Bröhr** (CDU) has been the chief executive of the Rhein-Hunsrueck District since May 2015.

**Bertram Fleck** (CDU) is the former chief executive of the Rhein-Hunsrueck District, who influenced and supported the district with his ideas and actions over his 26-year tenure.

**Carmen Strüh** is regional manager in energy consulting at the consumer advice center of Rhineland-Palatinate.

**Frank-Michael Uhle** is climate policy commissioner of the Rhein-Hunsrueck District.

- ⇒ Official website of the Rhein-Hunsrueck District (in German):  
<https://www.kreis-sim.de/>
- ⇒ Map of all renewable energy production sites in the Rhein-Hunsrueck District:  
[https://www.geoportal-rheinhunsrueck.de/media/a77c7443-4012-402d-8def-c5c2e128053b/20180305\\_Uebersichtskarte\\_Standorte\\_regenerative\\_Energien\\_RHK\\_A0.pdf](https://www.geoportal-rheinhunsrueck.de/media/a77c7443-4012-402d-8def-c5c2e128053b/20180305_Uebersichtskarte_Standorte_regenerative_Energien_RHK_A0.pdf)
- ⇒ Presentation on the status of the implementation of the Climate Protection Act (in German):  
[https://www.kreis-sim.de/media/custom/2554\\_701\\_1.PDF?1481645470](https://www.kreis-sim.de/media/custom/2554_701_1.PDF?1481645470)
- ⇒ Handbook on regional value creation from renewable energies in the Rhein-Hunsrueck District published by the Rhineland-Palatinate Energy Agency (in German):  
[https://www.kreis-sim.de/media/custom/2554\\_1073\\_1.PDF?1510917052](https://www.kreis-sim.de/media/custom/2554_1073_1.PDF?1510917052)



The municipality of **Mörsdorf** offers another example of combining local renewable energy generation with regional development in the Rhein-Hunsrueck District. A profitable location for wind power generation, Mörsdorf is home to eleven wind turbines that were built mostly on municipal land leased to windpark operators. With the help of this additional income of around 200,000 euros per year, the municipality built one of the longest suspension bridges in Germany (360 metres) that attracted more than 570,000 visitors in its first two years. The bridge, in direct proximity to the village, sparked a blossoming of local tourism. and created jobs in various fields of the local economy.

The project's initiators, **Marcus Kirchhoff**, mayor of Mörsdorf, and **Ingo Börsch**, a former member of the local council, are certain that without the income from Mörsdorf's windpark, the bridge would have remained a dream.

- ⇒ Mörsdorf municipality's official website (in German):  
<http://www.moersdorf-hunsrueck.de/>
- ⇒ Official website of the Geierlay bridge at Mörsdorf (in German):  
<http://www.geierlay.de/>

# Organisational details

## **Who can take part?**

The media workshop is open to international journalists with a professional background in energy, environmental or climate policy journalism.

## **How to apply?**

Please apply by following the online application procedure on the Clean Energy Wire website.

## **What are the deadlines?**

The deadline for applications is 23 March 2018.

We will inform you whether your application has been successful no later than 4 April 2018.

## **What are the costs?**

Participation in the media workshop is free of charge. All expenses incurred during the workshop, including food, accommodation, and transport, will be covered by the Clean Energy Wire.

Please note: participants must cover their own expenses for travel to and from Mainz (where the workshop will begin and end).

In specific cases and upon individual application we can provide funding support for travel (60% reimbursement for land-based travel, 40% reimbursement for air travel and).

## **What languages will be spoken?**

Presentations during the workshop will be either in English or in German. English-German simultaneous interpretation will be provided where necessary.

## **What about travel arrangements?**

Local transport *during the workshop* will be organised by the Clean Energy Wire. Participants are kindly asked to organise their own travel to and from Mainz (Mainz is 20 minutes by rail from Frankfurt/Main Airport and 30 minutes by rail from Frankfurt/Main Central Station).

## **Is there a possibility for individual research?**

If you are interested in extending the study tour for individual research, please let us know. We will support you in finding the most relevant experts, stakeholders and locations for your questions.

## **Are there other energy-related events in Germany in late April?**

Please note that the Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue and the Berlin Energy Week are taking place on 17/18 April and 16 to 20 April, respectively. For further information, please see:

<https://www.energiewende2018.com>

## **For more information, please contact:**

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 [#CLEWontour](https://twitter.com/CLEWontour)

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*Foto: Energieagentur Rheinland-Pfalz*

**The Energiewende has a social dimension, too. The affordability of energy use is a key consideration**

# Suggested readings

- [Cities, municipalities and the Energiewende](#) : A dossier compiled by the Clean Energy Wire
- [Germany's Energiewende: The easy guide](#): Key facts, figures, and all the basics in a compact overview published by the Clean Energy Wire
- [The role of biomass in the German energy system](#): A Clean Energy Wire dossier
- [Fighting windmills: When growth hits resistance](#). A Clean Energy Wire factsheet
- [Citizen support for the Energiewende: An overview of polls and surveys](#). A Clean Energy Wire factsheet

## About the organisers

### Clean Energy Wire

Germany's Energiewende – the energy transition – is a project of global relevance. It is a reference point in a world that has embarked on a path to end the use of fossil fuels, laid out by the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. As the share of renewables in the power sector is growing rapidly, there is an increasing focus on how the world's second largest exporting nation and Europe's number one importer of oil and gas is tackling decarbonisation.

The Clean Energy Wire provides well-researched, fact-based, and unbiased information as well as support for international journalists reporting on decarbonisation and the energy transition in Germany. We believe that quality journalism plays a key role in promoting productive domestic and international debates, which are essential for the successful transition to a low-carbon economy.

The Clean Energy Wire is committed to the highest standards in journalism. Our [charter](#) sets out the guiding principles of our work, including independence from commercial, political, or other special interests.

As an independent non-profit and non-partisan organisation, the Clean Energy Wire can offer its services free of charge thanks to its funders: Stiftung Mercator ([stiftung-mercator.de](http://stiftung-mercator.de)) and the European Climate Foundation ([europeanclimate.org](http://europeanclimate.org)). It has a staff of nine and is located in Berlin.

[www.cleanenergywire.org](http://www.cleanenergywire.org)