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Energy Talk

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Short biography of the presenter

Since 2010, Theresia Vogel acts as Managing Director for the Climate and Energy Fund, an institution supporting the Austrian Federal Government in minimizing the effects of climate change and leading the way to a climate friendly energy future. Within the Fund's portfolio Ms. Vogel is focusing on programmes which imply R&D for innovative energy technologies and smart urban development, such as the Austrian Smart Cities initiative or the Flagship Regions Energy. Before, Theresia Vogel managed the Department for Structural Programmes at the FFG, the Austrian Research Promotion Agency. Theresia Vogel completed a degree in civil engineering at the Technical University Vienna. Also, she worked as a research assistant for R&D at the university. Later in her career, Theresia Vogel developed the area of "Sustainability and Environmental Management" at the FH Wiener Neustadt and triggered research in this field.

Title of the presentation

Small but smart - any City can boost Energy Transition

Concept

Our motivation for giving an Energy Talk: Learning from each other and changing Europe together. The EUSEW 2019 is a good opportunity to present Austrian flagship projects to a broader European community. On the one hand, the Climate and Energy Fund would like to re-network at a European level, discuss new topics, find and implement them for Austria's and Europe's future in the sense of the common climate goals. On the other hand, we would be thrilled if the seed of our successful initiative will be sown also in other European countries, promoting citizen involvement and energy transition hand in hand.

So what outcomes are there to be expected? As one in five EU citizens lives in a small town (between 5,000 and 50,000 inhabitants), these inhabitants represent a huge potential for the energy turnaround. Therefore, the aim of our Energy Talks is to show that even the small towns can make a relevant contribution to achieving the climate goals and further how these small municipalities can be won over to the transformation. The best outcome was to find partnering cities, official or private institutions that want to carry on our vision of multiplying Smart Cities all over Europe. Another interesting outcome would be a best practice exchange with others already engaged in similar projects. Regarding the composition of the Energy Talk, we would encourage the audience to actively ask questions during the speech and close the Talk by giving the audience the possibility for an open discussion.

To make our Energy Talk as effective as possible, we would suggest to promote our participation as soon as possible via our social media channels, maybe offering also a matchmaking option. We are very active on our Twitter account and can additionally make use of comprehensive mailing lists containing contacts for professionals within the Renewable Energy Sector.

Content

Those who speak of Smart Cities often have rapidly growing cities with over a million inhabitants in mind. Europe is, however, characterized by only a few of these mega-cities, but countless smaller cities and towns. Due to its population structure, Austria is almost predestined to be a pioneer for such cities on the way to energy transition.

The success story began with the first Smart City concepts for urban and municipal development promoted by the Climate and Energy Fund in 2010. The first subsidized projects focused the establishment of zero emission urban quarters, regions or entire cities, reflecting the recommendations of the European Research Strategy as presented at the SET-Plan conference.

The resulting Austrian energy-transition-community has a successful tradition of generating ecological added value for the population in these smart communities, accompanying cities and Austria as a whole on the way to a new energy world. As Climate and Energy Fund, we believe that with our Smart City Initiative, we have laid the foundation for this change, and now we are looking for partners in Europe. Austria's small and medium-sized cities can be a model and multiplier for projects of similar sized cities in Europe.

The projects of the Smart Cities Initiative, funded by the Climate and Energy Fund, support the objectives of the "A Clean Planet for All" strategy primarily in the area of greenhouse gas reduction. Accompanying the promotion of renewable energy systems and network infrastructure, the energy system is being transformed and decarbonized. A positive additional effect is given by the strongly participatory approach in the projects. This promotes the necessary social transition on the way to an energy and mobility turnaround, because technical innovations alone will not make energy transition happen. This goal can only be achieved through a broad alliance within the population.

Innovation

The power of innovation of the Smart Cities Initiative projects lies above all in the trans- and interdisciplinary approach for small and medium-sized cities. Projects are not implemented one-dimensionally but holistically, across sectors and disciplines. The main innovation drivers of the projects are the integrated approaches of social participation. Through these approaches, the local population is actively integrated into the development and implementation work, forming thus a broad alliance on the way to a decarbonized society.