



SUSTAINABLE ENERGY WEEK 23 – 27 JUNE 2014

Press release and programme - June 2014

“Economy and community : a partnership for development”

Supported by the European Commission:

a symposium in connection with the European sustainable energy week.

Friday 27 June 2014 – 10.00 - 14.00 hrs.

Autoworld, 11 Parc du Cinquantenaire, 1040 Brussels.

This new European Week, which will be held from 23 to 27 June next in Brussels, is dedicated to Sustainable Energy and is aimed at promoting the generation and consumption of sustainable and renewable energy sources among the public, companies and public authorities alike. The “Participatory economy” represents a new genre for our economy; a real alternative to existing systems. It amounts to a theoretical model of the economic system that is designed to offer an alternative to both capitalism and planned economies. With this in view, a symposium, initiated by Sacchi Consulting and sponsored by the European Commission, has been arranged for Friday 27 June, from 10.00 to 14.00 hrs, at Autoworld, Cinquantenaire in Brussels. The meetings will be entirely free of charge and are open to both the general public and press: a programme is attached to this document (prior registration required at www.eusew.eu).

With the participation of :

Evelyne Huytebroeck, Minister of Government of Brussels Capital
Region for Environment, Energy and Urban Renovation

A representative of the **Italian Prime Minister** Matteo Renzi

A representative of the **European Commission**

and some representatives of the **successful examples** of participatory economy in energy on Friday, June 27 between 10 and 14 hrs.

European Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW) will be bringing hundreds of organisations and private individuals together for this event. In this way it will allow a diversity of contributors to come into direct contact with the public and with those engaged in the energy sector at local, regional or national levels. Organised by the European Commission, this initiative is aimed at supporting the targets set by the European Union for 2020. In practical terms, these entail:

- reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by at least 20% compared with 1990 levels
- by meeting 20% of our energy requirements based on renewable energy sources
- reducing primary energy consumption by 20% by improving our energy-efficiency.

Finance for new renewable-energy generating facilities does not concern only governments and private enterprise, since projects that are financed through **crowd-funding**, a collective form of finance involving small or medium-size private investors, represent a real challenge for the future. Inspired by theoretical economists like Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, the notion of **a participatory economy** first emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Among its core values are fairness, solidarity, diversity and self-management.

Respect for our planet and economic development are two key elements that have rarely come into conjunction over recent decades. Happily however, **environmental awareness** has been growing, the European Union has provided financial instruments in order to breathe life into a policy of European cohesion, thereby making it possible to provide financial support for projects by local authorities, including energy generated under community projects.

The five pillars of participatory economics

Conferences curated by invited experts attending the symposium on 27 June will be arranged in the context of the following topics:

- ✓ **Local:** public participation is restricted to a clearly-defined geographical area,
- ✓ **Private:** projects will be run by the 'private' party, even if the public sector plays its part through governmental departments,
- ✓ **Profitable:** private investment in the shape of crowd-funding becomes profitable for investors,
- ✓ **Development:** participatory projects must promote local development, involving either economic development or social development (meaning the project must contribute something concrete to the localities for development),
- ✓ **Respect:** for the planet and its natural resources, combined with the efforts also being put in by the public sector.

The participatory economy was recently addressed in two legislative documents, one in France and the other in the UK. For the first time, these define and set out the rights of private investors.

Linked specifically to the energy issue, '**community energy**' forms one of the first achievements of the community energy programme promoting new and renewable energies. This could have an impact on a strategic issue: energy itself. Faced with this reality since local energy-generation involves personal mobility, this represents a significant stage towards the expansion of the participatory economy.

Successful examples of participatory economies

Note that a representative of Windcentrale from Netherlands and a representative of Ecopower from Belgium will be among the speakers at the conference.

ITALY

Early in 2011, the installation of **Europe's largest photovoltaic power plant** at Montalto di Castro. With its total output of 85 MWc over a 283-hectare site, this plant generates sufficient power to supply an entire town of 24,000. By virtue of the electric power generated 24 hours a day using solar energy, this power station saves the equivalent of 78,000 tonnes of CO² a year. As well as the large size of this plant, operators are backed up by monitoring systems that increase its energy output compared with other methods used in the past.

Site development took place in several stages. The first was implemented in November 2009 with a capacity of 20 MW and The last was completed at the end of 2010. In order to achieve its objectives, the plant was financed by a consortium of international and Italian banks.

NETHERLANDS

In September 2013, a **crowd-funding** platform made it possible to raise 1.3 million euros in just 13 hours. The goal: to finance a 2 megawatt wind-power facility at the Culemborg unit. Vestas Wind Systems built this turbine in 2005. Windcentrale recently bought the turbine in order to refinance it, still using the crowd-funding system.

The turbine was the subject of an issue of 6,648 shares, each share representing electricity generation of approximately 500 kWh/year. Each turbine is treated as a cooperative, with separate contracts relating to the manufacturer and maintenance of the turbine in question. This involves a second set of projects for Windcentrale, which sold 20,000 shares to 5,200

households last summer. The campaign ultimately met with a positive response from the public.

In concrete terms, Windcentrale is aiming to increase the involvement of the public at large, not only in order to finance wind turbines, but also to secure wider support for the Dutch wind-power industry.

As first reported by Tildy Bayar at Renewable Energy World, despite a proud tradition of windmill use The Windcentrale's founder, Reitsma Harm, thinks there is still resistance on the part of the public over their willingness to switch to clean energy. He asserts this in the words: "*People think wind turbines fail to generate all that much electricity, or they do not turn often enough, or it takes more energy to build them than they could ever generate in return. It's quite wrong!*"

Reitsma believes one of the best ways of clearing up this mistaken perception is to enable individuals to invest their own money and to assess the return achieved on electricity generation using wind turbines.

It's essential that the public's enthusiasm for this new type of energy should be maintained. Many people want to play their part towards living in a better new environment, and indeed saving money. Whereas up till now, opting for green energy entailed a major cost, from now on, with a change of tack, anything is possible".

BELGIUM

Ecopower, the people's renewable-energy cooperative at Berchem, is heavily involved in the renewable-energies market. In 2008, the enterprise had 3 wind turbines and an electricity power-station powered by rape-seed oil at Eeklo, plus small hydro-electric power-stations at Rotselaer and Overijse. It is also involved in a wind-power project at Gistel, and another large-scale wind-power project at the port of Ghent (Kluizendok).

Apart from generating renewable energy, primarily from wind power, it is engaged in raising awareness of energy-efficiency among the public, and supplies green energy to its members. Ecopower attaches capital importance to its status as a cooperative, and shares all its profits among members, since for its managers it is not merely a question of the organisation's legal status, but rather a whole philosophy as expressed in its mode of operation.

That's why the enterprise does not simply build wind turbines, start-up electricity power-stations or recruit customers. It's important to them **to engage the customer actively** in their own energy supply. Accordingly, wind turbines are erected only after extensive consultation with local residents, who have the chance to become members and hence co-owners of the power plant. Likewise, for an electricity power-station, one makes an appeal to farmers as suppliers. Thus, anyone wanting to be a customer must first become a member of the cooperative. The cooperative is open to all: it is necessary only to purchase one share at 250 euros. No subscription fees or other charges to pay: the customer pays only for energy used.

Moreover, Ecopower invests a great deal in **supporting its customers**. The organisation attaches importance to everyone and provides them with direct, **accessible support**. Every member is important and has a vote at the General Assembly.

In addition, the organisation supports members of the cooperative wishing to install photovoltaic panels on their roof under their **private photovoltaic project**. So many ways to generate energy sustainably! Regrettably, these methods do not as yet provide sufficient capacity to meet current needs and existing demand. Nonetheless, the enterprise is determined to reduce energy consumption by its customers, for the take-home message is that the less energy customers use, the more room for new customers...

From a **social viewpoint**, the enterprise also seeks **customised solutions** for any consumers who experience difficulty paying their energy bill.

Ecopower is a profitable organisation but, as a cooperative, its prime purpose is not to maximise profits. The enterprise **invests** a large portion of its profits **in new projects**, for which the expected return may be somewhat less than that sought by private players in the energy market, for what matters is the added value for the company. None of which prevents members from being able to rely on a decent return (around 6%) each year.

Programme of the Conference

“Economy and Community: a partnership for development”

Friday 27 June, 10.00 - 12.30

Autoworld, Cinquantenaire, 1040 Brussels

Speakers :

- **Evelyne Huytebroeck**, Minister of Government of Brussels Capital Region for Environment, Energy and Urban Renovation
- A representative of the Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi
- A representative of the European Commission
- **Dirk Vansintjan**, President of REScoop.eu for Ecopower cvba, Coordinator of project REScoop 20-20-20
- **Johan Bloom**, Co-Managing Director, Windcentral
- **Marleen Mouton**, Regulatory Director, PWC
- **Peter Garré**, CEO Bopro, Administrator CVBA Zonneberg and Registered Member of Breeam Communities

10.00-10.40

« Legislative framework of the EU and its member-states »

This discussion will provide an opportunity to review the legislative framework of local authorities' development projects in accordance with legislation of the EU itself and of its member-states. Special attention will be paid to the process, currently under way, of renegotiating funds for the cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 period.

10.40-11.20

« Community energy - success stories”»

The potential for a partnership between the community and renewable energies has been successfully applied over the past few years in various projects of the renewable-energy type. Experts in this field, backed up by actual cases, will be sharing their experiences.

11h20-11h30 : coffee-break

11.30-12.10

« Prospects of economic development »

Discussion and analysis of economic data, studies and actual examples. Review of the virtues and drawbacks of the various economic options available for local energy-generation projects.

12.10-12.40

" Local energy and the new mobility: how to create synergy "

This debate will look at all the potential synergies between local energy generation and changes taking place in relation to mobility. This or that way of showing the advantages linked to new mobility, and the application of a philosophy that is based on community energy.

12.40-14.00 : lunch

Thanks to Good Planet for using the video "Home"

For further information, interviews with the panellists or other inquiries please contact :

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