

## ENERGIEWENDE TWINNING TOWNS



Steinhagen (DE) zu Gast in Woerden (NL)



### „Old friendship, new energy“

On 11th October 2019, the first bilateral workshop of the project „Energiewende Twinning Town“, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, took place in Woerden. The aim of the project is to support the exchange between European municipalities to implement the energy transition and to strengthen European cooperation for achieving the energy and climate goals.

The Steinhagen delegation with stakeholders from the public sector, the business sector and organised civil society travelled to the workshop by bus – on board with them were many questions on how the energy transition in Woerden, the Netherlands, works. Mayor Victor Molkenboer welcomed the guests from Germany in the newly renovated town hall. He emphasised that in the long-standing partnership between the two towns the focus in 2019/2020 is on sustainability and the energy transition. Klaus Besser, Mayor of Steinhagen, thanked the guests for organising the visit.

A film<sup>1</sup> about the importance of local climate measures and the activities of the Woerden community served as an introduction to the topic. The film was made by three high school graduates as part of a cooperation project between a local school and the community of Woerden. In the further course of the morning several presentations gave an insight in Woerden’s activities concerning energy transition and sustainability.



Street sign in Woerden

The town hall, for example, has been completely renovated and is almost energy neutral thanks to geothermal energy and photovoltaic systems on the roof. Tymon de Weger, Head of Sustainability in

<sup>1</sup>View at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bW6dZOSIJE&feature=youtu.be>

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Woerden, emphasised that it was not easy to reach all citizens and stakeholders with the municipality's energy transition-activities and that it was important to make climate protection feasible and financially viable for everyone. In the subsequent presentation on mobility, it was pointed out that Woerden has already set up 200 electric charging stations. For comparison: Steinhagen has only two so far. Woerden is working on making traffic in the area more climate friendly. It tries to achieve that via community-supported car sharing and a bicycle expressway from Woerden to Utrecht. A kind of pilot project in Woerden is the neighbourhood battery, which serves as a flexible buffer and storage for the local power grid. An important finding of the project is that piloting new energy system transformation activities should always take place in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. This



*The bright and transparent city counsel of Woerden*

includes, in particular, local residents in order to create confidence in new approaches to manage the energy transition on a local level.

The lunch snack was taken in the town hall: All participants could take part in a guided tour through the town hall. Here the open, bright offices with flexible workstations were shown and the people from Steinhagen were able to discover great innovative elements such as the canteen, which offers special bikes to generate own electricity for charging mobile phones.

In the afternoon, the group split up into three excursions. The first excursion started with a lecture and a visit to the first energy-neutral supermarket of the LIDL chain in Holland. An innovative combination of air-conditioning technology, product cooling, energy storage and carports with 1766 photovoltaic panels on the roof results in a net-zero energy balance for the supermarket. After that, the group was able to gain an impression of the extensive refurbishment of a residential area dominated by rented apartments from the 1960s to 1970s, so-called NOM apartments. NOM stands for zero per meter



*Cycle-charging-station*

and means that the apartments are energy neutral. The neighborhood battery was also tested as part of this project.

The second excursion group visited the Kreuger pig breeding farm, which deals intensively with the balance between a financially healthy farm, animal welfare and the environment. For example, waste products are used as animal feed and emissions are reduced by the use of an air purifier. The next stop was the Groenendijk company, which manufactures company clothing from easily recyclable textiles. The factory building was also built from recyclable materials.



*Group 3 at the Stadshotel van Rossum*

The third group was on the road with community bicycles and electric cars. The first stop was a visit to Stonecold, a service dealer for air and water heat pumps and which itself focuses on a sustainable energy supply, with 156 solar collectors on the roof supplying the electricity for the heat pumps in its own building. Among other things, the company stands out with its initiative to get young people interested in technical training in the field of renewable energies. Afterwards, the participants got to know the city hotel of Rossum, which is regarded as one of the most sustainable hotels in Holland. With a holistic concept, water, electricity and heat are to be used as efficiently as possible. In addition, the hotel

cooperates with sustainably certified suppliers and uses organic and Fairtrade products. For its efforts, the hotel has received the "Green Key Gold" sustainability certificate.

All excursion groups came together again in the sustainable office building MeetInOffice. The building stood empty for a long time, but has been ecologically rebuilt in recent years and now functions as a location for meetings, congresses, learning meetings or networking events. Over coffee and cold drinks, the participants were able to talk about their excursions and had the chance to learn more about the conversion of the building in a guided tour. Particularly impressive was the green façade with more than 3000 plants.

Finally, the dinner was accompanied by a photo review of the day. There was also a short presentation by Sandra Oosterhout about a sustainability project in Namibia, which is implemented with the participation of the Woerden Citizens' Committee. Finally the warm farewell by both mayors followed and the Steinhagen delegation travelled back inspired. The return visit of the delegation from Woerden to Steinhagen is already planned.



*Office building MeetInOffice with green façade*

The evaluation after the exchange shows the enthusiasm for the project and the energy system transformation in both communities: The visitors from Steinhagen praised the fact that Holland, despite its natural gas reserves, is determined to abandon the use of natural gas. They were also impressed by the speedy and effective renovation of the apartment buildings and the town hall. In the opinion of the participants, this is more than just saving emissions. A completely new concept of work and interaction as well as innovation and experimentation is filled with life here. There were many ideas what could still be improved in Steinhagen. There is, for example, no facades greening. Traffic must also become more climate- and environmentally friendly. But the people of Steinhagen also had ideas on they can support the people of Woerden to make even more progress with the energy transition. There will certainly be talks on this during the return visit to Steinhagen. In general, both municipalities would like to have a better understanding of how the energy transition in both countries is promoted at municipal level and how it can be placed in the national contexts. This would help to discuss new ideas in a more targeted way. The project *Energiewende* Twinning Town supports this process by communicating efforts, funding programmes and local lighthouse projects in practical terms in an understandable bilateral way.





*All participants of the exchange in the town hall*