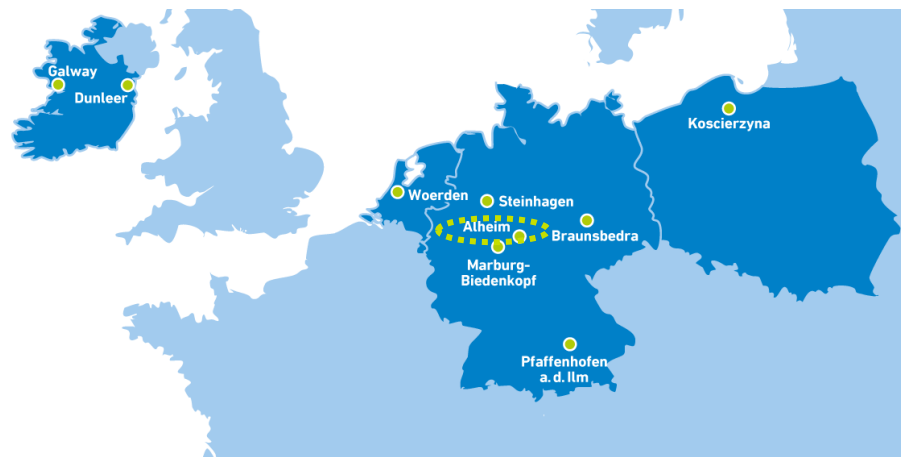


ENERGIEWENDE TWINNING TOWNS



Dunleer (IRL) in Alheim (GER)

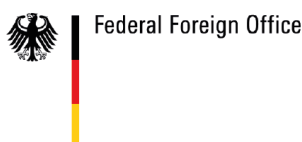
„Alheim welcomes Irish partners for international exchange on the local energy transition”

On the 22nd and 23rd of October 2019 the second bilateral workshop of the project Energiewende Twinning Towns took place, which is funded by the Federal Foreign Office. The aim of the project is to support the exchange between European municipalities on the implementation of energy and climate targets and to strengthen European cooperation to achieve the energy and climate targets. Representatives from the Irish municipality of Dunleer/Louth and their partners in Alheim have set priorities and targets for the workshop days in advance: to discuss climate protection and education concepts and to promote the energy transition by learning about transferable projects. Dunleer aimed at getting to know different stakeholders and renewable projects in Alheim and to find time to discuss in detail with the Alheimer Climate Team.

The joint activities of the partnership were embedded in the program of the 3rd Alheim Climate Week (20-25th of October 2019). With numerous events and hands-on activities, the municipality of Alheim drew attention to the importance and urgency of climate and environmental protection during the climate week. Families, seniors, children and adolescents, in short, all citizens were invited to spend a week learning about climate and environmental protection and actively participating in the actions.

The Hessian community Alheim comprises 10 districts on the left and right of the Fulda, has a size of 63.85 square kilometers and about 5,300 inhabitants. Through the program Energiewende Twinning Towns Alheim found a European partner with whom it can jointly exchange ideas about the energy transition at local level: Dunleer (County Louth) has also signed up for a partnership and has a lot of experience in the field of energetic building renovation. In May 2019, the two cities met for the first time at a joint event in Berlin.

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22nd of October 2019

On the first day of the exchange, mayor Georg Lüdtkke, together with Petra Herzig, the responsible staff member for village renewal and climate, welcomed the Irish group in the parish hall. The group was composed of the following participants from Dunleer; Elizabeth Kearney, Dunley Sustainable Energy Community Lead, Mary Deery, Louth County Council, Patrick Mulroy, Louth Energy Projects manager, Eugene Conlon, Louth Energy and Fergus McCann, Engineer Louth Energy. Monika Riekhof from Zuber worked as a consultant for the municipality of Alheim within the workshop days. Representing the



Mary Deery signs the golden book of Alheim

project partners, Anne Höh from the Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform and Christina Hülsken from the Renewable Energies Agency accompanied the workshop days.

First, the mayor presented the guidelines of the community work. For example, the Global Sustainability Goals are anchored in the statute of the municipality. In this context, he presented the previous climate protection efforts. Alheim is part of the local energy transition since long: In 2012, the Renewable Energies Agency awarded the Hessian community as an Energy Municipality of the Month. Since then, Alheim proceeded with its climate efforts: the electricity and heat generation continues to be driven by decentralized power plants. Many renewable energy projects have been implemented over the last few years. Mayor Lüdtkke emphasizes that an important step towards the high acceptance of the local energy transition is a comprehensive education of the citizens. Another pillar is the consistent orientation of educational work from young to old on sustainable education in accordance with the goals of the UN Decade.

The Irish delegation was particularly interested in the energy concept for the ZuBRA region (inter-municipal cooperation Bebra, Rotenburg an der Fulda, Alheim), which was created by the cooperation of the three municipalities involved.

Before lunch, the group visited the environmental education center Licherode, which is one of the first



Alheim raised the Irish flag in front of the town hall in honor of the visit

of its kind. Up to 3,000 children per year learn here about ecology and local sustainability. The concept is based on extensive manual work and direct contact with nature, so that environmental cycles and the need for appreciation of limited resources can be illustrated. Senior trainers receive training at the Environmental Education Center to learn how to teach children: Gottfried Massmann (75) said that since completing his training as an environmental coach in 2006, he has had several hundred assignments, mostly on forest and waste. The group was impressed by his dedication and experience.



Playground on the premises of Kirchner Solar Group GmbH

In the afternoon, a visit to sustainable companies was scheduled as part of the Alheim Climate Week. Alheim citizens also took part in these events. The first stop on the energy tour was at Kirchner Solar Group GmbH. It has undergone a number of changes in recent years. In the past, the company bought or leased land and installed "solar trees" on it and then sold them individually to citizens.

Thus Alheim has become a pioneer of citizen solar parks. Today, this business model no longer pays off in Germany, so that the company is now only active as a service provider. This includes the planning and sale of photovoltaic systems as well as the evaluation of areas. Current, innovative projects were also presented, such as PV roofs on tuk-tuks for the island state of Tonga, semi-transparent PV modules that can be used for patio roofing or carports, or modules that can turn to the earth at night in deserts, so that dew formation serves cleaning purposes.

During the visit to the Häde model poultry farm, the farmer of the year 2019 in the category of poultry, Fabian Häde, presented his farm, which has been selling organic eggs since 1975. With the own brand "Sonnenei" the aim is to sell a CO₂-neutral egg. The photovoltaic systems on the roofs and on the outside area operate, among other things, the fans for cooling the stables. Fabian Häde is also co-



Visit of the biogas plant BPA on the model poultry farm Häde

operating with a nearby biogas plant. The waste heat is used to heat the barn for chick rearing. The biogas plant BPA Biopower Alheim is owned by nine farms. While 30 farms supply corn, grass and grain, the plant produces around 1 megawatt of electricity. After the fermentation of these raw materials in the plant, the residues are brought to the fields as fertiliser. However, the operators do not yet know how the plant can be economically operated after the end of the EEG support.

The exchange between citizens, other local actors and the Irish partner community continued in the evening in the "House of Generations" in Heinebach. After the presentation of the project Energiewende Twinning Towns, Eugene Conlon gave an insight into the work of Dunleer, in particular with regard to retrofitting. Afterwards Matthias Färber of EAM, a regional energy supply company in municipal hands, presented the challenges of a network operator with increasing decentralised energy production. Many customers are increasingly calling for greater independence from the energy supplier and want to invest in a PV system with its own storage capacity.



The film "Message to my grandchildren" by astronaut Alexander Gerst runs with the power of the cyclists

Armin Frankenfeld from the Radko-Stöckl-School Melsungen proved with the bicycle cinema that the participants can produce the electricity for the beamer themselves, with the help of converted home trainers. The film "Message to my grandchildren", by astronaut Alexander Gerst, was shown. In addition, Mr. Frankenfeld illustrated exemplary climate protection education games: Pieces of bread portrayed in which order of

magnitude potentials for different energy resources are available. While fossil fuels represent only small pieces of bread, the solar potential is three whole loaves.

In the presentation of the Climate and Energy Efficiency Agency (KEEA) by Hannah Koch and Armin Raatz, it became clear that Alheim can already generate 100 percent of its electricity consumption from renewable energies. In the heat and transport sectors, however, the pioneering municipality of Alheim is still lagging behind. As a result, the renewable share of total energy consumption is very low. The two speakers then presented recommended measures for climate protection from the climate protection concept they had developed. In the ensuing discussion with the citizens, questions arose in particular on the topic of economic efficiency in sustainable heating. It was criticized that it is currently not financially worthwhile to invest in renewable heating systems. In the discussion, the Irish group supplemented its experience with energy-saving contracting with an energy supplier.

23rd of October 2019

On the second day of the exchange, the group of representatives from Alheim and Dunleer visited the exhibition opening of the Energy Saving Campaign Hessen at the VR Bankverein Heinebach. In the form of banners with brochures, homeowners can inform themselves about the retrofitting of old buildings



Exhibition opening of the energy saving campaign Hessen in Heinebach

as part of the exhibition. Mr. Klaus Fey, press coordinator of the "Hessian Energy Saving Campaign", welcomed the group, while the certified energy consultant Klaus Ohlwein explained the six steps to an energy-saving house (roof insulation, exterior insulation, windows, cellar ceiling, heating replacement, solar system for hot water). Important is the sequence of the measures which can be taken, so that heating demand can be reduced after a occurred insulation. In

addition, the Energy Pass for Hesse was presented: Homeowners can enter all data into a software, with the help of an energy consultant is analyzed, where the largest heat losses are and which measures are most meaningful for the respective house.

Before the lunch break, the group used the time to have a cup of coffee and cake and enter into deeper conversations. All participants were particularly interested in a continuation of the partnership and a return visit to Dunleer. In Sterkelshausen, the energetically renovated and modernised village community centre was visited. The renovation of the roof and walls cost around 234,000 Euros, 75 percent was paid with subsidies. In addition, the community itself invested a further 50,000 Euros, including for the new fence around the property.

In the concluding workshop Dunleer was particularly impressed by the experienced intensive inter-generational cooperation on site. Alheim and Dunleer are facing similar challenges and both municipalities are convinced that cooperation with neighbouring municipalities is more successful. Dunleer also wants to transfer this Alheim approach to its own region. All in all, the partnership is convinced that municipal politics can only be successful if it cultivates a good connection and clear communication with the citizens. The most important criteria for successful participation are information, advice, implementation and evaluation. Another great potential that the Dunleer group has discovered for itself during the exchange is the use of ecotourism with the aim of strengthening local added value. During the discussion the idea arose to organise an event similar to the Alheim Climate Protection Week in Dunleer.

The evaluation reflected the enthusiasm for the project and the energy turnaround among all actors. The project Energiewende Twinning Towns has helped to establish a European bond between the two committed municipalities.



Farewell photo