

## **DGRV annual survey of energy cooperatives reveals: Current energy policy leads to decrease in investments**

**One in three energy cooperatives have no plans for further investments / Huge potential for district heating / Local authorities are important partners**



Berlin, 7 July 2014. The reform of the Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG) is causing considerable uncertainty among energy cooperatives. Almost one in three cooperatives will not be engaging in any further investment this year. In sharp contrast, last year only eight per cent of cooperatives were without an investment plan. These are the findings of a recent survey undertaken by the German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation (DGRV) jointly presented in Berlin today with the German Renewable Energies Agency (AEE). "The new Renewable Energy Sources Act is a real threat to a swift energy transition and will affect smaller players, such as energy cooperatives, in particular. Although the Coalition Agreement between the governing parties promises more grassroots participation, the activities of energy cooperatives will now be significantly scaled back," criticises Dr. Eckhard Ott, DGRV Board Chairman.

To date, energy cooperatives have invested around 1.35 billion euros in the expansion of renewable energies. This year alone, according to DGRV estimates, around 300 million euros in investment will be held back. The main target of energy cooperatives' criticism is the imposition of the full renewable (EEG) surcharge on self-generated green electricity which is marketed to members or local consumers. The DGRV also fears that the planned tendering system will put energy cooperatives at a considerable disadvantage. The threshold limit of 100 kilowatt peak for compulsory direct marketing, which will be reduced even further in the future, is of particular concern. The greatest potential is now identified in the field of district heating networks. "There are still lots of anaerobic digesters which are not yet combined with a heating concept. This is an opportunity for energy cooperatives which run heating networks for villages or town districts," emphasises Ott. 70 new cooperatively-run district heating networks have been created in the last three years alone.

This year's survey also took a look at how cooperatives work together with local authorities. The findings are clear: "Local authorities are very important partners for energy cooperatives. They make rooftops and buildings available, are involved as members or are even active in the managing bodies of cooperatives. Local authorities have been involved in setting up one out of two of all cooperatives", according to Ott.

A flash poll of local authorities which generate their own power by the German Renewable Energies Agency shows there is a reciprocal relationship between cooperatives and local authorities. The survey shows that local energy cooperatives exist in 70 per cent of cases. They enable broad public participation and help to foster a climate of acceptance. The survey of local councillors showed unmistakably that it is the lack of planning certainty under the current unstable conditions, as well as caps on expansion targets, which are the greatest hurdles for a decentralised, community-driven approach to the energy transition. "It is local authorities, cooperatives and energy citizens - in other words precisely those groups that have been the driving force behind the energy transition - which are most disaffected," comments disappointed AEE Director Philipp Vohrer. "It remains to be seen how the new policy framework will affect committed groups such as these."

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Wilfried Roos, Mayor of the energy generating municipality of Saerbeck in North Rhine-Westphalia concurs: "The many changes made to the EEG have increased bureaucracy and made things much more difficult for local projects. Big energy firms which failed to take up the challenge of renewables are the primary beneficiaries of the newly passed reform. The bottom line is that the reform will make the energy transition more expensive for electricity consumers, not cheaper," according to Roos.

### **Methodology**

The survey asked 718 energy cooperatives organised in the DGRV which were founded between 2006 and 2013 (based on 216 questionnaires returned). This is the third time the survey has been carried out.

The results are available at

[http://www.genossenschaften.de/sites/default/files/Auswertung%20Studie%20Brosch%C3%BCre%202014\\_0.pdf](http://www.genossenschaften.de/sites/default/files/Auswertung%20Studie%20Brosch%C3%BCre%202014_0.pdf)

The expert enquiry by the German Renewable Energies Agency was sent to representatives of 89 municipalities which are generating their own power in Germany. Replies were received from one third.

Diagrams on the survey are available at

[www.unendlich-viel-energie.de/mediathek/grafiken/hemmnisse-und-triebfedern-der-regionalen-energie-wende-aus-sicht-von-energie-kommunen](http://www.unendlich-viel-energie.de/mediathek/grafiken/hemmnisse-und-triebfedern-der-regionalen-energie-wende-aus-sicht-von-energie-kommunen).

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