

Press information

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REZ hosts international symposium on energy communities

In cooperation with US and UK partners

All over the world, so called energy communities are emerging as part of the solution for more sustainable, low-carbon, decentralized energy systems. Are these energy communities customer-centered, market-driven and welfare-enhancing? This has been the key question arousing a lively debate in a virtual symposium on February, 9th, 2021. Together with her colleagues, California-based Fereidoon P. Sioshansi and David Robinson, of the Oxford institute for Energy Studies, Sabine Löbbe, Professor in energy markets at Reutlingen Center for Distributed Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency hosted this event.

Some 45 experts from Europe, USA and Australia shared and discussed concepts and solutions, in depth research and practical use cases on energy communities.

Traditionally the power sector was organized from generation to customer with the end customer as the “load” to be served. In future, distributed energy will gain significant market share and responsibility – changing the fundamental flows of power and the relationships between suppliers and customers. Energy communities are to be part of this power shift, serving to integrate the consumer as an active part of the future energy system.

As presentations and discussions demonstrated, energy communities can indeed contribute to the transition towards distributed energy systems. Nicolò Rossetto from the Florence School of Regulation offered a taxonomy as a sound basis to define the concept of energy communities, which, as it turns out, is more established in the European hemisphere than elsewhere. Many research projects and case studies are based on the early implementation of the European legislation, enhancing the realization of regulatory frameworks e.g. in Italy, as Luca Lo Schiavo

from the Italian Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment (ARERA) demonstrated. However, it is also clear that energy communities in Europe and elsewhere come in many legal forms that do not fit neatly in that legislation.

As political and regulatory support rises, technology advances, and customers are becoming more and more aware of and interested in local, ecologically sound alternatives and self-consumption, the need to develop energy communities becomes compelling. The symposium thus examined case studies and findings from many countries, including *inter alia* Spain, Germany, UK, the Netherlands and France.

In a second symposium in April, the group of researchers and practitioners will continue this exchange. The plan is to publish the findings in a book, edited by Sabine Löbbe, together with Fereidoon P. Sioshansi and David Robinson.

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