Borkum, 4. November 2023

TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: CITIZENS' WORKSHOP TO ESTABLISH AN ENERGY COMMUNITY ON BORKUM

On Saturday, 4 November 2023, the first Citizen Engagement Workshop for establishing an Energy Community took place on the North Sea island of Borkum. 28 committed Borkum citizens took part in the event to learn more about the benefits and legal framework surrounding Energy Communities. In future workshops, the ISLANDER project will support interested citizens in the process of setting up an energy community.

Energy Community as an important pillar of Borkum's energy transition

The ISLANDER project aims to actively involve the island's inhabitants in the energy transition by supporting the establishment of an energy community on the island of Borkum. A series of workshops will be held on the island to bring together the community, gather ideas for initial projects, and advance the formation of the energy community. This process was kicked-off with the first citizen engagement workshop in November 2023.

First workshop provided general information on Citizens Engagement

The workshop was opened by Mayor Jürgen Akkermann with an inspiring presentation on Borkum's future plans, which were developed within the framework of "Borkum 2030+". Central to this vision is the goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2030 and driving forward sustainable development. In consideration of Borkum's unique and exposed location in the North Sea, making the island particularly vulnerable to climate change, the Mayor of Borkum emphasised the need for climate protection and adaptation. The second presentation was held by, Axel Held, Managing Director of the Stadtwerke Borkum, the local energy utility. He provided insights into the future of the island's energy system.

The third presentation by project partner Steinbeis was dedicated to the EU funded project ISLANDER. The project which started in 2020 for a duration of five years aims to support the island decarbonisation by installing new renewable resources and smart control systems. The project also investigates how citizens can actively participate in the energy transition process. As demonstrated by many research projects, involving citizens through participation not only promotes local value creation, but also anchors decentralised energy projects in the long term. The commitment, expertise and capital of citizens can, when pooled together, directly benefit the local community and economy. Lukas Winkler, consultant specialized in cooperatives, from the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative Association, intervened during the workshop to inform the workshop participants about the general concept of energy communities, their business areas and the different legal forms. The information shared during this workshop is summarised here.

First results following a brainstorming session and steps ahead

To gather initial ideas for a possible business model for the energy community on Borkum, a brainstorming session was conducted, in which the participants discussed concept ideas, competences and cooperation within the energy community. Topics such as investments in solar systems and EV charging infrastructure were discussed, as well as joint solutions in the field of electric mobility. After a vivid discussion, it appeared that the citizens-led operation of PV solar systems is seen by many as a promising project which could be a possible starting point for an energy community on Borkum. This idea will be further developed in further workshops. In a second workshop, which will take place on 10 February 2024, citizens will look in more detail at the development of a business model for the energy community. More information will be communicated soon.

1 - Impression of the first citizens' workshop on Borkum on 04.11.2023.

If you have any questions or require further information about the citizen engagement process, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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Contact

Karoline Haack, Steinbeis Europa Zentrum
E-Mail: islander@steinbeis-europa.de

Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum
Steinhäuserstr. 12
76135 Karlsruhe