



# Energy Policy and Structural Change in Germany - Study Tour for State Senators and Representatives of the US Midwest to Germany

## Event

[Visitors Program](#)

## Date

15 - 21 November 2015

## Location

Berlin, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Germany

## Speaker

[Dr. Stephan Sina](#)  
Andreas Graf

A group of 12 decision makers from the Midwest in the USA came to Germany from 15 until 21 November 2015 in order to explore and discuss German energy policy and aspects of structural change in former industrial and coal regions. Participants were able to speak with representatives from ministries, (state) parliaments, think tanks and businesses in Berlin, Cologne and Düsseldorf.

The group consisted of state senators and representatives from Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin, who, for the most part, either chaired or were ranking members of their states' respective Energy or Economics Committees. In addition, a member of the Councils of State Governments [Midwestern Legislative Conference](#) (MLC) was also present. The MLC is the nation's only nonpartisan association of state officials serving all three branches of government in all 50 states and the U.S. territories. It promotes excellence in state government and fosters the interstate exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials shape public policy.

The program started with a dinner talk with [R. Andreas Kraemer](#), Founder and Director Emeritus of the [Ecologic Institute](#) in Berlin und Senior Fellow at the [Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies](#) (IASS) in Potsdam. Mr. Kraemer introduced Germany's decision to phase out nuclear energy and rapidly increase the use of renewable energy sources.

The next five days were filled with engaging discussions and presentations by experts spread across a number of fields, allowing the participants to gain a broad understanding of the economic, technological and societal changes taking place in Germany in the context of the *Energiewende*:

- Presentation and discussion with Dr. Thies F. Clausen, Senior Associate Electricity Market Design and Renewable Energy, [Agora Energiewende](#)
- Discussion with Peter Fischer, Deputy Director-General for Globalization,

Energy and Climate Policy, [Federal Foreign Office](#)

- Presentation on the issue of Electric Mobility and Smart Cars by Dr. Gereon Meyer, Head of Strategic Projects with the Future Technologies and Europe department, [VDI/VDE](#)
- Dialogue with Thorsten Herdan, Head of Department, Energy Policy, Heat and Energy Efficiency at the [Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy](#) (BMWi)
- Discussion with [Daniel Buchholz](#), Spokesperson for Environment and Energy, Social Democratic Party, Berlin House of Representatives
- In Cologne, the group visited the virtual power plant „[Next Kraftwerke](#).“ Virtual power plants are networks of decentralized, medium-scale power generating units, often using renewable sources, that link renewables with flexible consumers. Thus, virtual power plants supplement and improve existing structures of the power system.
- At the Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Agriculture, Conservation and Consumer Protection of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia ([MKULNV](#)), various presentations from different perspectives were scheduled on the issue of economic development and structural change on a municipal and regional level. Various best practice examples were featured, including the former waste disposal centre Leppe, now called [:metabolon](#), that is now one of the most modern waste disposal sites in Europe and a reference facility for international experts. The objective of the :metabolon project is to redevelop the current Waste Disposal Centre Leppe by turning it into a competence, learning and innovation site for material conversion and location-related environmental technology and techniques.

A trip to the energy self-sufficient village of [Feldheim](#) in Brandenburg, which has installed private local heating and power grids, showed the group one of Germany's examples of local energy autonomy.

A Riverside Chat on “Economic Transition in a German Coal Region” led by [Heide Schinowsky](#), Member of Parliament of the State of Brandenburg from Alliance90/The Greens, discussed the opportunities and challenges in the coal region of Lusatia (Brandenburg/Saxony) in the context of the German Energy Transition.

The program was developed in close cooperation with the [German consulate in Chicago](#) and was sponsored by the [German Federal Foreign Office](#).

## **Funding**

[Federal Foreign Office](#) (AA), Germany

## **Organizer**

[Ecologic Institute](#), Germany

## **Speaker**

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