

EVENT

Visitors Program
Economics
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First I-CITE Study Tour: Renewables and Rural Energy Opportunities



[1]

While renewable energy and its role for achieving an energy transformation, improving the environment, and supporting rural economies is a hotly discussed topic in both the US and Europe, approaches to increasing the share of renewables in the energy mix differ significantly on opposite sides of the Atlantic. As a result, exchanging Transatlantic experiences and lessons learned is of crucial importance.



Klaus Krinner, Farmer, Entrepreneur and Head of Operations of the Straßkirchen Solar Park



Participants Bill Midcap (Rocky Mountain Farmers Union) and Jeff Nelson ((East River Electric Power Cooperative) talking with agro-forestry expert Klaus Wiesinger (Bavarian State Research Centre for Agriculture)



Jeff Nelson (East River Electric Power Cooperative)
speaking with Stefan Ortner of ÖkoFEN



Participant Bill Midcap (Rocky Mountain Farmers
Union) observing wood chips at a visit to an
Austrian wood chip production and logistics site



The ICITE Study Group at a visit to the Krinner
GmbH in Straßkirchen, Germany

I-CITE responds to this need for exchange by organizing a range of study tours that bring together decision makers and other relevant Transatlantic stakeholders to explore and discuss innovative solutions to unlocking the potential of renewable energy on the community level in the US and Europe.



The ICITE Study Group at a visit to a biogas facility in Upper Austria

The first I-CITE study tour, held from 21-26 August 2011, took 15 Americans (primarily from Colorado and South Dakota) and 5 Europeans (from Germany, Latvia, and Sweden) around Bavaria, Germany and Upper Austria to explore how policies, vision, and political leadership are spurring businesses and entrepreneurs to bring about a transition to an energy system dominated by renewable energy. "Germany and Austria have ambitious goals for the installation and utilization of renewable energy, exemplifying Europe's commitment to renewable energy," said [Timo Kaphengst](#) [2], Senior Fellow and forest and bioenergy expert at Ecologic Institute Berlin. The tour was designed to have conversations with entrepreneurs, farmers, foresters, politicians, researchers, and local politicians to see what different approaches are available to achieve these goals. "We gave special attention to Germany's Renewable Energy law, which as an important tool for encouraging the use of new energy technologies in Germany, played a decisive role," added Kaphengst. "The US participants were keen to learn about how the feed-in tariff and other policies have resulted in increasing numbers of renewable installations and led to economic development," said [Stephanie Wunder](#) [3], Senior Fellow and agricultural and bioenergy policy expert at Ecologic Institute Berlin. "We had a spirited discussion on the challenges and possibilities of translating the feed-in tariff and other policies to the US context. The diversity of participants enriched the discussions and led to a more integrated view of possibilities, benefits and challenges for renewable energy development."

Over the [course of five days](#) [4] [pdf, 780 kB], the participants were able to visit a number of renewable energy installations. "The

participants were impressed by the entrepreneurial and business activity being driven by the political support provided for renewables at the regional, state, and EU levels," said [Dominic Marcellino](#) [5], Fellow and renewable energy expert at Ecologic Institute Washington. "The entrepreneurial success stories we heard at the Straßkirchen Solar Park and from [ÖkoFEN](#) [6] [a pellet boiler heating specialist in Upper Austria] particularly struck the group."

"We were able to show the participants integrated renewable systems at the village level in Ascha and at the farm level at [Biolandhof Braun](#) [7]," said [Andreas Graf](#) [8], Transatlantic Intern at Ecologic Institute Berlin. "At each stop, the participants would chat with each other about how to implement what they were seeing back in the US."

The tour is the first of a series Ecologic Institute will be leading that focuses on building Transatlantic networks to exchange lessons and best practices on a range of environmental policies. "Our goal is to help regional and local leaders understand the array of policy options out there and to make decisions based on experience. The study tours enable us to get Europeans and Americans in the same room to talk through what does and doesn't work" said Marcellino.

During the tour, participants discussed methods for transmitting and transferring lessons, best practices, and effective policies into their respective regional situations. They were able to discuss these issues in depth with several political leaders: Mr. Hans-Josef Fell (Member of the German Bundestag), Ms. Christine Kamm (Member of the Bavarian State Assembly), and Mr. Rudi Anschober, the Upper Austrian Minister for the Environment. The Energiesparverband of Upper Austria assisted with the program in Austria and also hosted a dinner for the group on 24 August 2011, where they were joined by Dr. Gerhard Dell, head of the Verband, and Mr. Hannes Herndl, the President of the Upper Austrian Chamber of Agriculture.

The [I-CITE project](#) [9] was jointly organized by the Ecologic Institute and the Atlantic Council of the United States with financial support for this tour from the European Union's External Action Service, the German Foreign Ministry, the World Future Council, and the Sopris Foundation.

I-CITE stands for "Incubating Communities of influence for Transformation of their economies and environment". It was a civil society dialogue project sponsored by the European Union with study tours on a number of subjects related to environmentally-sound economic transformation and the creation of the [Emerging Leaders in Environmental and Energy Policy Network \(ELEEP\)](#) [10].

Further Links:

- [Emerging Leaders in Environmental and Energy Policy Network \(ELEEP\)](#) [10]
- a [study tour to Detroit and Pittsburgh](#) [11] looking at the transformation of industrial regions;
- a [study tour to Germany and Denmark](#) [12] exploring the transformation of the energy economy;
- a [summit in Brussels](#) [13], which explored a wide range of issues and gave ELEEP members an opportunity to highlight their work for the rest of the group, and
- a [study tour to Budapest, Hungary](#) [14] on the subject of the EU's energy and environmental policy in Central Europe.
- a [study tour to Colorado and California](#) [15] on hydraulic fracturing and renewable energy, to provide an American context to energy policy developments;
- a [study tour to Stuttgart and Paris](#) [16] examining the evolution of sustainable transportation and mobility through business and policy initiatives.
- Tri-State Neighbor: [International Series: S.D. delegation explores European renewable energy projects](#) [17] by Barry Amundson (7. November 2011)
- Aspen Journalism: [Biomass in Germany and in Austria ... and in Colorado?](#) [18] (28 September 2011)
- Madison Daily Leader: [S.D. group returns from energy study tour](#) [19] (30 August 2011)
- Press Release of the South Dakota Farmers Union (SDFU): [South Dakotans Return from Renewables Study Tour in Germany, Austria](#) [20] (29 August 2011)
- Article in the German Regional Newspaper "Landshuter Zeitung": [Amerikaner informieren sich in Bioenergie-Region Straubing-Bogen](#) [21] (25 August 2011) [German]
- Press Release of the South Dakota Farmers Union (SDFU): [SDFU President, Other South Dakota Leaders to Travel to Germany, Austria to Tour Renewable Energy Sites](#) [22] (17 August 2011)

- **[Dakota Midday](#)**

[23]

Air Date:

30 August

2011

Jeff Nelson

is the

general

manager of

East River

Electric

Power

Cooperative



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Renewable Energy in SD

and Chris Studer is the communications director of the South Dakota Farmers Union. They discuss their week long trip to Germany and Austria touring renewable energy sites and what can be implemented in South Dakota.

- [South Dakota Delegation Returns From European Renewable Fuels Tour](#)

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ation Returns From European
Renewable Fuels Tour

Posted: 29
August
2011
A South
Dakota
delegation
led by the
State
Farmers'

Union just returned from a week-long tour of Germany and Austria renewable energy companies. Farmers Union's Chris Studor says the group was able to bring back some ideas for improving renewable energy production in South Dakota. He says Europe has a community based model that leads to energy independence and that should be a goal in the U.S. as well. Studor says it's important for the U.S. to be more aggressive in developing renewable energy for the future.

Studer
hopes
everyone
will work
together to
achieve a
more
sustainable
renewable
fuels
industry
whether its
ethanol,
biodiesel,
solar or
biogas.

- **Bringing
German
energy
practices
back home**

featured
video at
[KSFY](#) [25]
Posted: 4
September
2011
When Chris
Studer
went
overseas,
he said
what stood
out the
most was
Germany
and
Austria's
promise to
keep their
energy
strong.
"They've
made a
commitmen
t to become
more

sustainable
energy-
wise.
They're
becoming
more
energy
efficient in
the way
they build
and use
their
homes,"
Chris
Studer said.
He saw
solar panels
on almost
every
home. And
he tells
KSFY that's
something
Americans,
and South
Dakotans,
need to
start.
"Americans
need to
change
their
mindsets in
many ways
to become
more
renewable
in the way
they think
and to
become
more
energy
efficient
when it
comes to
home and
businesses,
" Studer
said...

- [Inside
KELOLAND](#)
:
[Renewable
Energy](#)
[26]
By Darcy
Andersen
Published:
4
September
2011
- Ecologic
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Dialogue:
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of and
Opportuniti
es from the
Implementa
tion of an
Energy
System
Powered
only by
Renewable
Energy -
Hans-Josef
Fell](#) [29]
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Dialogue:

[Emergence
of German
Renewable
Energy
laws, and
Germany's
feed-in
tariff \(FiT\)
mechanism
- Christine
Kamm](#) [30]

21 August 2011 to 26 August 2011
Germany, Austria

Funding

European Union, European External Action Service (EEAS)

Organizer

Ecologic Institute, Germany

Team

Sören Haffer

Date

21 August 2011 to 26 August 2011

Location

Germany, Austria,

Language

English

Number of Participants

20

Project

I-CITE: Transforming Economies through Community

Project ID

2225

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Links

- [1] https://www.ecologic.eu/sites/files/event/2013/1-i-cite_0.jpg
- [2] <https://www.ecologic.eu/1963>
- [3] <https://www.ecologic.eu/1170>
- [4] https://www.ecologic.eu/sites/files/event/2013/icite_rural_energy_tour_agenda.pdf
- [5] <https://www.ecologic.eu/2479>
- [6] <https://www.oekofen-usa.com/?sitelang=en-us>
- [7] <http://biolandhofbraun.de/>
- [8] <https://www.ecologic.eu/3968>
- [9] <https://www.ecologic.eu/3941>
- [10] <https://www.ecologic.eu/node/6871>
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- [16] <https://www.ecologic.eu/7462>
- [17]
- http://www.agupdate.com/tristateneighbor/news/regional/article_dc0ddf56-0953-11e1-be28-001cc4c002e0.html
- [18] <https://www.aspenjournalism.org/2011/09/30/biomass-in-germany-and-austria/>
- [19]
- http://www.dailyleaderextra.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=20465521&BRD=1302&PAG=461&dept_id=181987&rfi=6
- [20]
- <http://www.sdfu.org/news/read-more-news/south-dakotans-return-from-renewables-study-tour-in-germany-austria>
- [21] <http://www.idowa.de/landshuter-zeitung/container/container/con/904692.html>
- [22]
- <http://www.sdfu.org/news/read-more-news/sdfu-president-other-south-dakota-leaders-to-travel-to-germany-austria-to-tour-renewable-energy-sites>
- [23]
- <http://www.sdpb.org/tv/shows.aspx/?MediaID=59953&Parmltype=RADIO&ParmAccessLevel=sdpb-all>
- [24] <https://wnax.com/South-Dakota-Delegation>Returns-From-European-Rene/10762052>
- [25] <https://www.ksfy.com/>
- [26] <https://www.keloland.com/NewsDetail6162.cfm?Id=120343>
- [27] <https://www.ecologic.eu/.../3941>
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