

## **Part 10:**

### **Energy Transition: social acceptance and how to get the people on board**

#### **80% of the Germans would like “to change something”**

A recent survey, the 2019 Energy Transition Barometer by the KfW (the German state-owned development bank), indicates that Germans are increasingly concerned about the current energy supply and they prefer a more sustainable energy supply in their own households. According to the survey, around 80% of German households would like “to change something” in their energy supply - in order to protect the climate, the local environment and to reduce own energy costs.

Almost two thirds of Germans (64%) want to save significantly more energy in the future. Over half (52%) would like to focus more on renewable energies in their individual energy mix. Nearly half of Germans (46%) want to become their own electricity producers and 40% would like to receive more information on sustainable energy supply. Only 8% of the people do not approve of renewables.

As more than 34% of the total energy is used in buildings and as the largest part is for heating in private households, starting at home is a good idea. Germany’s Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) runs a portal on energy efficiency ([www.deutschland-machts-effizient.de](http://www.deutschland-machts-effizient.de)), providing information on numerous programmes to save energy, to increase the share of renewable energies in one’s own energy mix and to produce one’s own energy, for example, through KfW funding programmes. Energy consultants provide individual advice on which measures make sense for each household.

The KfW funding programmes for energy-efficient building and renovation (CO<sub>2</sub> building renovation programme) financed by the BMWi help house and apartment owners, property owners' associations, housing companies and housing cooperatives, property developers, municipalities, non-profit organizations and commercial enterprises to obtain low-interest loans and grants for funding energy efficiency measures.

#### **Fridays for future - Societal debate on environmental protection**

In 2019, climate change became the dominant topic in Germany.

On December 14, 2018, around 150 schoolchildren met in front of the Reichstag building (Legislative Yuan) in Berlin. The Government’s Coal Commission and the UN Climate Conference in Katowice, Poland, were still meeting. Young people held posters saying "There is no Planet B" or "End Coal!". They skipped school to demand a better climate policy. It is the first major demonstration in Germany by a young protest movement called "Fridays for Future", which was started in Sweden by youth activist Greta Thunberg. Back then, no one realized what these young people were kicking off.

In 2019, Germany agreed on the Climate Action Programme with a clear pathway to CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, coal will be phased-out by the end of 2038 at the latest. Starting in 2021, basically every tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> that is emitted in Germany will come with a price tag. The initially suggested price tag of 10 Euro per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> was raised to 25 Euro/tonne after heavy critique from climate researchers, civil society and by opposition parties. The new EU Commission is presenting a "European Green Deal" to consistently transform the continent towards a green market economy and to be climate neutral by 2050. 2019 saw more climate action than the past ten years. Climate change, long elusive in political and social discourse, controversial and ignored, moved to the center of the social debate. In September 2019, in Berlin alone, almost 1.5 Mio. demonstrated for climate protection. No future government will be able to turn back the clock. "Fridays for Future" played an important role.

In 2020, the debate about the future will really kick-off in Germany, and not only on Fridays: Big companies like Bosch want to become climate neutral and demand a reliable framework. Car manufacturers are aggressively pushing their new electric models onto the market because otherwise they fear billion Euro fines from Brussels. Investment houses are withdrawing from fossil-based investments.

Movements like "Fridays for Future" and "Extinction Rebellion" will continue to push the Government.

### **Germany - a long history of saving the environment**

These are a lot of measures that will require all - industry and individual consumers - to adapt to new concepts and strategies. People around the world wonder: Is the general public really supporting the energy transition? Is there a broad scale public acceptance and a cross-party consensus?

In Germany, traditionally, the support for Green Energy and other environmental measures is very strong. Germany looks back at a long history of green movements. It all started in the 1970s and 80s, when people were experiencing dying forests due to acid rain, heavily polluted rivers with dying fish and rising numbers of asthma and respiratory diseases especially in children.

Those ecological activists were first ridiculed as tree huggers, but they founded the Green Party in 1993, a one-platform party fighting for the environment. Nowadays, the Greens are an established multi-platform party, and most other parties to various degrees also integrated some elements and features of green policies into their party manifesto and electoral programmes. This is a history of about 40 years of saving the environment.

The climate action plan, drafted by the coalition government, with the Greens as one of the big opposition parties, is indeed a manifestation of this joint understanding.

**Garnering local acceptance for onshore wind turbines and power grids** - Citizen participation is vital for a successful energy transition.

Many citizens and communities are directly or indirectly affected by the energy transition, for example by close proximity to wind farms or to newly built transmission lines and their poles, which may lead to public resistance and NIMBY (Not In My BackYard) attitudes. Despite the general support for climate protection, like everywhere else, German people are anxious about the costs of new policies. High approval rates of renewable energy and the energy transition in general do not automatically translate into willingness to pay substantially more for energy or CO<sub>2</sub> taxes and levies. Beyond, people are weary about onshore wind turbines or new energy transmission lines in their backyard. The only solution is dialogue with the people concerned. People need to be included in the projects, through the community or through energy cooperatives. Experience shows, that acceptance of onshore turbines does not increase with more distance but with financial participation.

In a similar way, since 2015, Germany has initiated a public dialogue on grid expansion. Local public dialogue teams serve as neutral and independent contact points for local residents to gain more information on many different aspects of the matter. The information website [www.bürgerdialogue-stromnetz.de](http://www.bürgerdialogue-stromnetz.de) already provides clear and easy-to-understand information on pressing issues relating to grid expansion as well as advertising the events hosted by the initiative.

Another measure to increase the public acceptance of deep transformation processes was the so-called transformation fund – a payment to current coal mining regions over the next decades to fund infrastructure projects and to secure employment options in regions that so far strongly depend on coal.

Disclaimer: this information has been compiled by the German Institute Taipei based on information provided by trustworthy governmental, scientific and other sources. While we have taken great care to cross-check information, we cannot guarantee accuracy. Note, that some data might be provisional and is subject to adjustments (03/2020)