



Field Report

Municipalities: working together for a low-emission economy

Experiences and prospects for a new form of European cooperation



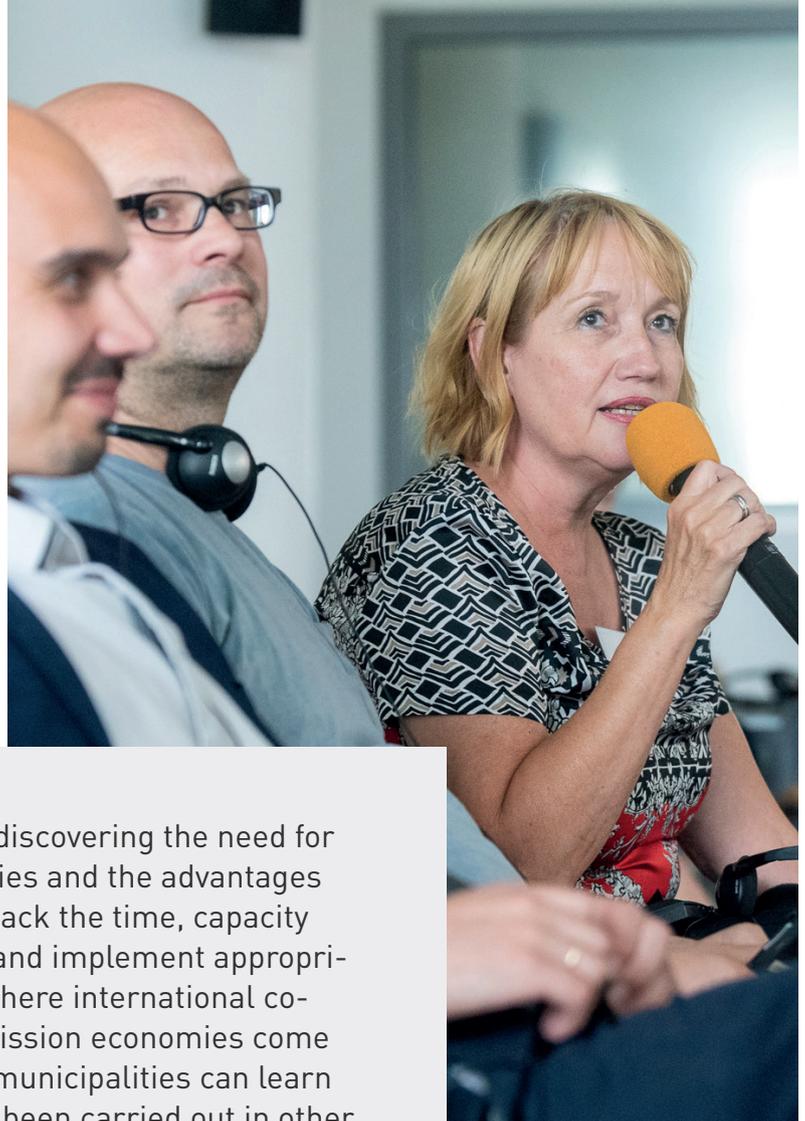
Foreword

As part of a three-year consulting project, adelphi and the Polish network of cities „Energie Cités“ (PNEC) brought together Polish and German municipalities and supported them in their efforts to design low-emission cities and municipalities. The focus of the project was on preventing air pollution, strengthening a low-emission economy and highlighting the socio-economic advantages of integrated low-emission strategies for municipalities.

The various municipalities compared their approaches, made new discoveries and inspired each other to further action. In addition, eight municipalities deepened their existing town-twinning relationships by establishing „municipal climate partnerships“ with the support of the project. This generated many new ideas and also concrete projects for a low-emission economy. The current publication presents experiences from the project.

In the first part of this report, we look back on three years of cooperation and show the added value of such an exchange from the perspective of the participating municipalities. In the second part, we derive recommendations for creating a municipal climate partnership. And in the third and final part, we present individual experiences from the four municipal climate partnerships, providing insights into how cooperation between municipalities works in practice at a European level.

Strong arguments for more exchange about low-emission economies: looking back on three years of German-Polish cooperation



More and more municipalities are discovering the need for low-emission development strategies and the advantages that they bring. But many of them lack the time, capacity and technical resources to design and implement appropriate low-emission actions. This is where international cooperation projects on local low-emission economies come in. Individuals in less experienced municipalities can learn about successful actions that have been carried out in other municipalities and the factors driving their success. At the same time, cities and municipalities that have already tried out innovative approaches can become even more engaged. In the following pages we present what the participants in the project have taken away from the cooperation.

What are other municipalities up to? It helps to look beyond your own backyard

Thanks to cross-border exchange, municipalities realise that they are facing the same challenges as many other municipalities in the European Union (EU). At the same time they learn about other approaches and free themselves from their established routines. Exchange of this type provides valuable new contacts, taps into fresh sources of information and creates a feeling of being part of a strong network.

“The exchange was very helpful for us in Sztum. It gave us an opportunity to broaden our horizons, question our own ideas and get some external input from colleagues and experts.”

Sztum

“The bilateral exchange made it clear that different methods can lead to the same goal.”

Bielsko-Biała

“Of course there are differences between municipalities, whether within one country or in different countries. But there are also many similarities.”

Gierałtowiec

“What we will take away from the project is new approaches for mobilising local people and designing participation processes.”

Kościerzyna

Inspiration for new paths: processes triggered by the exchange

Experiences from other countries can help municipalities to see low-emission action in a new light. Some participants in the project were greatly inspired by their trips and got down to work immediately.

A new bike highway in Częstochowa (Silesia): At a bilateral workshop on sustainable mobility, representatives of the city administration in Częstochowa – Silesia’s second-biggest city – discovered the potential of cycling as a means of everyday transport. The delegation hopped on bikes and rode a section of the “Radschnellweg Ruhr RS1” (Ruhr Bike Highway RS1) in Essen. Now the city administration is planning to develop a similar bike highway between Częstochowa and the neighbouring municipalities. This will complement the existing 80-kilometre urban cycling network and will be gradually implemented as municipal and national roads are modernised. The city is also in the process of developing intermodal junctions. This was inspired by Essen’s first “mobility station”, which opened in July 2017. Częstochowa will build three intermodal mobility stations combining bus stops, tram stops and bike rental points. Further, the city is looking for investors for an electric car-sharing system, which would also be incorporated into the mobility stations.

More cycle paths in Bielawa (Lower Silesia): The Deputy Mayor of Bielawa was likewise inspired by the mobility workshop in Essen. The city administration of Bielawa now wants to increase the use of bicycles and expand its network of cycle paths. Their aim is to create a real alternative to cars and promote sustainable tourism.

New impetus for sustainable town planning in Częstochowa (Silesia): Inspired by a workshop session on sus-

tainable urban planning, the city doubled its budget for public green spaces in 2018 compared to the previous year. Among other things, it plans to convert the square in front of the town hall into a public green space.

Talks about expanding mobility sharing in Bielsko-Biała (Silesia): Bielsko-Biała, a pioneer among low-emission cities, has begun to discuss the options for introducing an e-bike scheme. The city is located close to the mountains, and such a scheme would encourage inhabitants to cycle despite the city's many hills. Discussions are also underway about expanding the area covered by the current bike-sharing system.

Sow now, reap later

Even where the knowledge acquired during the cooperation project did not immediately result in a new initiative, project participants found the dialogue enriching. Some ideas need time to mature and can be revisited at a later point.

Practical insights into the hydrogen competence centre: As part of a consultation meeting, the host city Herten took its visitors on a guided tour of the "h2herten" research centre, on the site of the former Ewald colliery. Here, research is taking place into hydrogen and other fuel cells. The new technology is not yet marketable but it could be essential for meeting climate targets in the future. For the delegation from Bielsko-Biała, gaining insights into these innovations was a highlight of the exchange.

Exploring new horizons – driving projects shoulder-to-shoulder

In more advanced forms of international cooperation it is possible to actually initiate joint projects. On page 12

you can read more about the results of the four municipal climate partnerships which were supported by the cooperation project.

“The most valuable discovery for us was that we can do some things simultaneously in Poland and Germany. For example, as part of the European Mobility Week.”

Mirostaw Reczko,
Mayor of Ciechanowiec

Make low-emission economies great again!

Last but not least, exchange with international partners can strengthen political will among the hosts, too.

The cooperation with Polish partner cities convinced the Mayors of Ritterhude and Rosbach to put climate action back on the political agenda. It emerged that the Polish partner cities had already pushed ahead with ambitious low-emission strategies. As a result of the cooperation project, the Germans discovered the range of funding opportunities offered by the National Climate Initiative (NKI). Both municipalities now aim to become Masterplan Municipalities.

Building European municipal climate partnerships



Town twinning plays an important role in the EU: local authorities, citizens, schoolchildren and members of clubs and associations learn about the culture of the other country and make friends. Many of these partnerships started in the post-War period in parallel with the process of European integration. However, a new generation has been born since, putting some of these partnerships to the test. Expanding the exchange to include climate and energy issues can breathe new life into them. Building a low-emission economy is a concrete challenge that affects municipalities throughout Europe. Below, we present our recommendations as to how partner cities can put their cooperation on a new, professional footing.

How do municipal climate partnerships work?

Most cities and municipalities know very little about the low-emission goals and strategies of their twinning partners. This is where municipal climate partnerships come in. Direct exchange between the partners deepens their awareness of common challenges, facilitates the identification of possible solutions, enables the transfer of knowledge and expertise, and strengthens motivation to take action. The partnerships create structures for regular exchange about climate change mitigation, building on personal and political relationships. The municipalities also gradually develop a better understanding of the local and national conditions for creating a low-emission economy in their partners' countries.

Municipal climate partnerships have three specific objectives:

- **To share experiences** about each other's focus areas, e.g. energy management, expanding mobility services, the „Wärmewende“ (transition in the heating sector), sustainable power, citizen participation
- **To transfer knowledge**, especially where a city wishes to implement similar low-emission actions to its partner city
- **To initiate joint projects:** Awareness-raising projects aimed at residents and schools are relatively easy to organise. Municipalities can also try to set up investments projects

Municipal climate partnerships require direct dialogue in order to thrive. One of their main components is therefore regular visits to the partner municipality, ideally once or twice a year. However, the exchange does not stop there: videoconferences and telephone calls allow the partners to continue sharing and to flesh out ideas for joint projects.

“Joint projects generate new impetus, over and over again.”

Susanne Geils,
Mayor of Ritterhude

What actors should be involved?

Unlike traditional town twinnings – often based mainly on cultural exchange between residents, clubs and associations in the two cities – municipal climate partnerships take place more at a local authority level. The key requirement for a municipal climate partnership is political support from within the city administration. Which specific departments actually participate in the exchange depends on the interests of the partners. They can include people working in the field of low-emission economies, as well as those working in related fields or areas directly affected, such as civil engineering, energy and environment, urban development and funding acquisition. It is important that more or less the same group of people are always involved so that a basis of trust can be built between the partners.

Since the majority of greenhouse gas emissions are not directly under the control of municipal administrations, working with actors outside the administration is also important for the partnership. Key players include municipal companies, private companies, chambers of trade, professional and other associations, clubs, church groups and interested citizens. Having a strong network of contact people from such groups can enrich the municipal climate partnership greatly.

Example

The fact that Susanne Geils, Mayor of Ritterhude, and Leszek Tabor, Mayor of Sztum, were actively involved in the first meeting of the municipal climate partnership was important when it came to identifying a common policy objective. The two have long been friends thanks to the town twinning, and they put the new cooperation high on their local agendas. Their staffs can count on solid political backing. This helped them secure approval from the Municipal Council for an application for funding from the KfW (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, the German government-owned development bank) for the energy-related modernisation of one district of Ritterhude – a direct result of the partnership.

Check list: Actors

- ✓ Is there clear political support for the exchange?
- ✓ Within the municipal administration: have the relevant departments been contacted, informed or invited to join?
- ✓ Outside the municipal administration: what target groups can we involve or mobilise?

How can we ensure high-quality exchange?

Regular personal meetings, ideally once or twice a year, are essential for establishing a basis for cooperation between the partners. The meetings need to be prepared in advance so that the exchange about low-emission topics has a proper framework, contents and overall goal. However, this preparation does not have to involve a great deal of effort. The host municipality is responsible for running the meeting and should agree an agenda with the partner and appoint a facilitator who can oversee the discussion and make sure the results are minuted. A visit to a location where a low-emission action has been implemented gives the meeting practical relevance and helps the partner municipality understand the local situation.

Any lack of technical knowhow can be remedied by inviting external experts to join the meeting. Municipalities have various resources at their disposal here, some of which are free, such as representatives of local energy companies, energy agencies and utilities. Public transport planning authorities can also make a valuable contribution to meetings, for example, providing input for new ideas.

Example

Sebastian Lenz of Nahverkehrsgesellschaft Baden-Württemberg mbH (the Baden-Württemberg Regional Transport Agency) provided external consulting to the partner towns Rosbach and Ciechanowiec. He helped them to carry out an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of their public transport systems and discover hidden potential and possible approaches. The shared learning experience helped the cities to recognise the need for action in their local areas. As a result, they have now discussed strategies and solutions together.

The meetings can start off in English or German, but when it gets down to discussing the details it is advisable to use an interpreter, especially if not all participants speak English. The extra cost of this is justified by the increased quality of the exchange.

“Having a facilitator and professional translations took the exchange between our two municipalities to a new level of quality.”

Ulrich Müller, Ritterhude

Check list: High-quality exchange

- ✓ Decide on items for discussion and draw up an agenda
- ✓ Appoint a facilitator for the meeting
- ✓ Would the exchange benefit from external expertise?
- ✓ Is there a local site that we can visit?
- ✓ Do the participants have a common language or do we need an interpreter?

How can we find common topics?

Many municipalities have already implemented low-emission actions. The partners can carry out a „topic mapping“ exercise to see how they can incorporate these actions into the partnership and identify which topics are suitable for joint development or projects. The first step is to make a list of all the topics – writing them up on a white board, for example. The municipalities then go through the topics in turn, saying which ones are relevant for them, whether any related activities have already taken place and which topics are of interest to them, or in which areas there is a need to take action. This enables the partners to identify quickly what they have in common and where they differ.

If the municipal partners fail to find any common topics, it can be worth looking instead at the advantages of implementing actions in the area of a low-emission economy. Experience shows that focusing on goals rather than specific actions can help municipalities to develop different strategies that ultimately lead to the same end results. Moreover, municipalities can link low-emission actions to projects that are already planned. For example, it is possible to include energy-efficiency actions as part of a building modernisation project, to build cycle paths as part of redoing a local road, or to link the redesign of green spaces with local public transport services. This approach is also useful as the partner municipalities may wish to – or may have to – implement actions at different speeds.

Besides common topics, there are also areas where municipalities can learn from their partners.

Example

A topic mapping exercise helped the partner cities Rosbach and Ciechanowiec to identify mobility as a common area for action. At the same time it identified the modernisation of street lighting as a good starting-point for knowledge transfer. After receiving advice from Rosbach, Ciechanowiec has now started to modernise its street lighting replacing gas lamps with using energy-saving LED lights.

Check list: Topics

- ✓ Carry out a topic mapping exercise and present the results visually
- ✓ Discuss the current and future priorities of the two partner municipalities on the basis of the topic mapping
- ✓ Joint projects can take various forms, e.g. consulting, exchange, investment
- ✓ Focus on goals rather than actions or investments – this allows more room for creativity and enables partners to go at their own pace when it comes to implementation

What financing options exist?

Generally, only small sums are earmarked for international cooperation in municipal budgets. However, partner municipalities can look for opportunities within pending or ongoing investments. If a municipality is applying for funding for a low-emission project, say, they can check to see to what extent „consulting services“ are permitted as part of the application. This may enable to include the partner municipality in the project and to cover (part of) the cooperation costs.

Cooperation over a low-emission economy should also be understood as a process in which both municipalities are headed towards a common goal. At the outset the partners can focus on „low-threshold“ projects that create an impetus for investment. In this way the partners can speed up the implementation process in parallel, using whatever funding programmes are available to them.

Example

Rosbach and Ciechanowiec initially focused on participating together in the European Mobility Week. This raised awareness about cycling both internal and externally – which should make bigger investments in cycling infrastructure easier in the future in both municipalities.

Translation and travel costs are a challenge, especially for smaller municipalities. Costs can be reduced by means of forward planning, for example. Meetings at an administrative level can relatively easily be combined with visits by larger groups of citizens from the partner city. Communication between the partners can also partly be electronic.

The EU „Europe for Citizens“ programme also provides support for city partnership projects. Applications must relate to certain funding areas, which change each year.

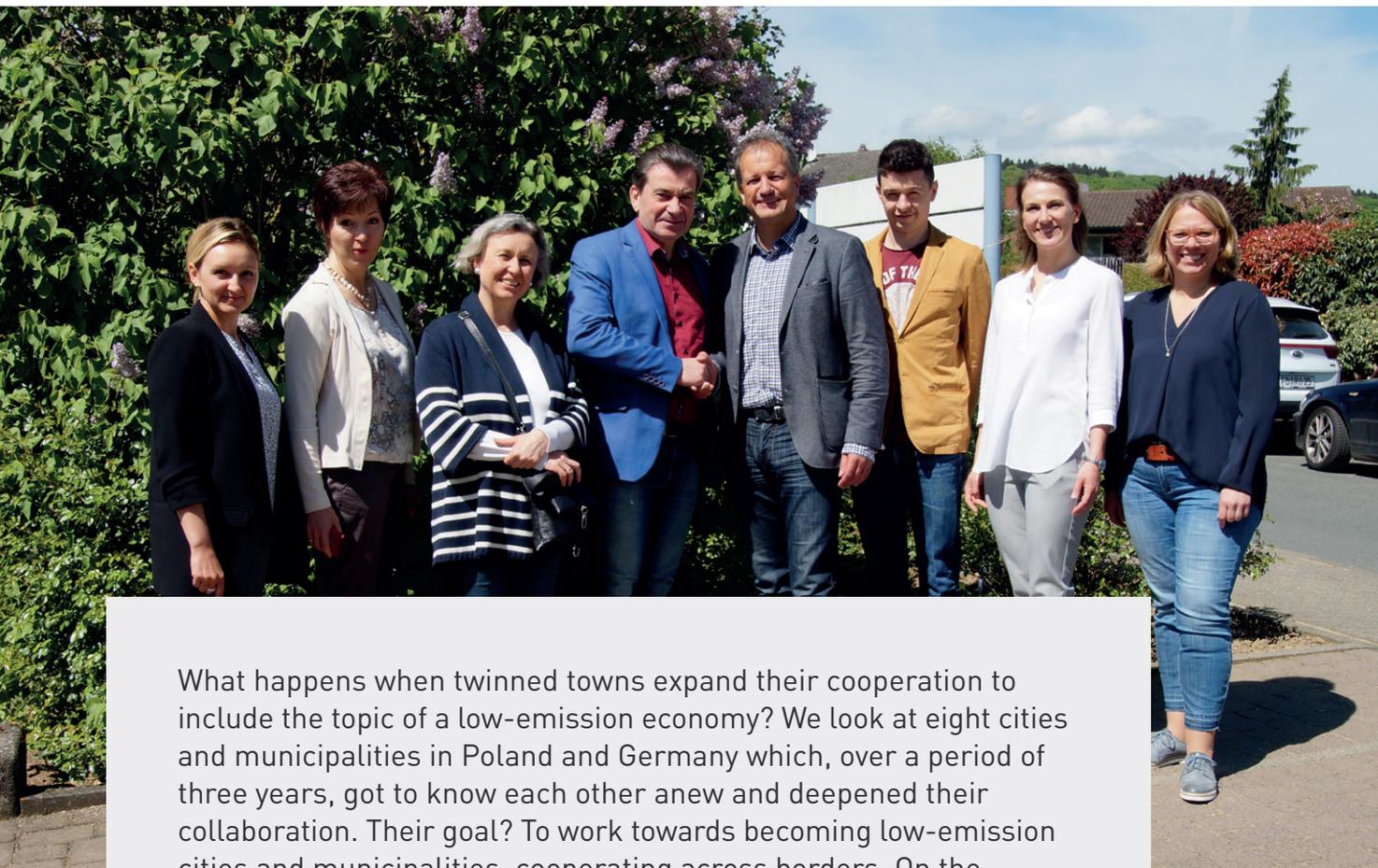
Example

Herten and Szczytno are exploring the possibility of organising their school exchanges in the future via „eTwinning“ – a free digital platform run by the European Commission for collaboration on specific topics by schoolchildren and staff. The two municipalities also used Skype at their last working meeting and found it a workable means of communication for regular exchange between staff, thereby saving on travel expenses.

Check list: Financing

- ✓ Are there any ongoing or planned projects which could be expanded to include the partnership work?
- ✓ Look for suitable funding at a national, regional and EU level
- ✓ Common goals can be achieved through different actions
- ✓ Keep transaction costs to a minimum: combine visits by groups of citizens with administrative meetings, plan in advance and use electronic communication

Two countries, four stories: the results of three years of cooperation



What happens when twinned towns expand their cooperation to include the topic of a low-emission economy? We look at eight cities and municipalities in Poland and Germany which, over a period of three years, got to know each other anew and deepened their collaboration. Their goal? To work towards becoming low-emission cities and municipalities, cooperating across borders. On the following pages, we present the direct results of their partnership and the indirect impact of the dialogue between them.

Ciechanowiec (Podlaskie) & Rosbach vor der Höhe (Hesse)

Monika Jost turns over the bright yellow flyer in her hands then puts it back with the others. The flyers are ready to be distributed door-to-door in the city of Rosbach. They contain the programme for the Mobility Action Day, an attempt by the city to draw attention to the subject of sustainable mobility. Alongside its partner city Ciechanowiec, Rosbach is taking part in European Mobility Week 2018, which promotes the topic of sustainable mobility each September across Europe. The partner cities are the first to participate as a pair.

A lively partnership gives the exchange a new level of professionalism

Monika was surprised to find that, as Head of the Department of Municipal Development, she would be dealing with the question of a low-emission economy. Due to personnel changes in the municipal administration, she was entrusted with the task of supporting the municipal climate partnership. She knew the partner city because it has been twinned with Rosbach for more than 20 years, with regular visits and joint activities taking place. For example, a joint sports festival was held in 2015 and a former fire engine belonging to the Rosbach Fire Brigade is still in active use in Ciechanowiec.

By participating in the project, the cities' Mayors Thomas Alber and Mirosław Reczko wanted to take the partnership to a new level and above all learn from each other. Both Rosbach and Ciechanowiec had already invested in low-emission measures. In Rosbach, a sports hall and a fire station are heated in an environmentally friendly, energy-efficient manner. In Ciechanowiec, a school and a church had been equipped with heat pumps and the

town hall had been comprehensively modernised. But the Mayors now set new goals for the cooperation, goals which the cities should work together to achieve.

One of those goals was implemented at the very first meeting, held in the autumn of 2016. Mirosław Reczko, Mayor of Ciechanowiec, was particularly interested in modernising the municipality's street lighting, replacing the old gas lamps with energy-saving, low-maintenance LED lights. He listened carefully as representatives from Rosbach explained how they had modernised their entire street lighting system in 2012 with the help of a contracting system and a subsidy from the German federal government. This is not only good for the environment, it's good for the wallet, too: if electricity prices remain around their current levels, Rosbach would save more than EUR 700,000 over 20 years thanks to their efficient street lamps. Mirosław was convinced by what he heard. Ciechanowiec now also plans to gradually modernise its street lighting by 2022.

Joint efforts underpin participation in European Mobility Week

The meeting also produced another insight: both municipalities are geographically spread out, made up of several districts. For that reason people generally choose to travel by car. The partners quickly identified "sustainable mobility" as a topic which they had in common. They discussed this in more detail at the second meeting. With the help of two mobility experts from Stuttgart and Białystok, participants from the two municipalities carried out a targeted analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of their mobility services so they could better assess the potential for cycling, walking and public transport. The analysis found that the cycling infrastructure was not the problem: both municipalities had already begun planning and investing in this area. To establish cycling as a means of transport,

they first needed to raise awareness of its advantages. To this end, the partner municipalities decided to participate jointly in European Mobility Week 2018 in parallel with other ongoing projects.

Under the direction of Monika, Rosbach had embarked on a town development process that included a survey of local residents. The survey found that sustainable mobility and “bicycle-friendliness” were very high on residents’ wish lists. At the same time, Ciechanowiec was busy planning a bypass avoiding the centre of the town. As a test run, it decided to offer activities such as bike tours as early as 2017 as part of EU Mobility Week. The tours were successful: “We have since received many enquiries about when we will be organising bike tours again. The campaign was particularly successful with children and young people in the town,” says the Mayor.

For EU Mobility Week 2018, Ciechanowiec even closed one road to cars. Initially Monika had difficulty getting other stakeholders such as local associations to support the Mobility Action Day. It was quite a challenge getting it off the ground – “but once the initial planning was done, we were inundated with enquiries. One resident even agreed to donate towards public benches to make the town a nicer place to spend time, especially for pedestrians,” says Monika.

The partners are already working on new ideas

Meanwhile, both partners are already working on next steps towards greener mobility and quality of life in their respective towns. Ciechanowiec will provide local police officers with bicycles. In Rosbach, Mayor Thomas Alber plans to replace the municipal authority’s car fleet with electric vehicles.

“Municipal development also means thinking about the effect on the local low-emission economy, wherever

possible,” says Monika. Learning from partners is not a one-way street: “The partnership creates the perfect framework for exchange between colleagues on this topic. We have a lot to learn from each other.”

Kościerzyna (Pomerania) & Cölbe (Hesse)

The municipality of Cölbe in Hesse and its partner municipality Kościerzyna in the Kashubian part of Poland are not afraid of major undertakings. Before the project started, Kościerzyna had already invested heavily in modernising public buildings and introduced a free public transport system. It had also founded the association “Słoneczna Kościerzyna” (“Sunny Kościerzyna”) that had installed 200 solar panel units on the roofs of private households, with more in the planning. The municipality also aims to complete the conversion of its street lamps to LED by the end of 2018.

Cölbe also has much experience in the area of a low-emission economy. The municipality made the headlines nationwide with its car-sharing project initiated by local residents. In 2012, working with private partners and a local company, the municipality built a 3.3 MW ground-mounted solar power system in less than 11 months. The district of Schönstadt is home to the largest local heating network run by a community-based cooperative in Germany. With so much engagement already, the two municipalities almost had trouble finding a topic for further, collaborative efforts. After some discussions, however, it became clear what they should do. The new goal is to anchor the “Wärmewende” – the transition in the heating sector – in the local population.

It's the getting there that counts

Again, the representatives of the two municipalities initially thought big. They planned to carry out model renovations of different types of buildings in the two municipalities and, by allowing the public to inspect the modernised buildings, for example, to motivate private homeowners to carry out their own energy-based modernisations. Although it proved impossible to realise this ambitious plan within the short duration of the cooperation project, exchange on the topic triggered important processes and discussions in both municipalities.

A fast start in Kościerzyna

Inspired by the exchange with Cölbe, Kościerzyna decided to set up an "Energy Advice Centre". Six months later the Centre opened in the town hall. Since then it has been sharing information about replacing coal-fired boilers, options for using renewable energy, saving electricity, gas and water consumption, and air quality in Kościerzyna. More than 150 people made use of the free advice offered in just the first five months of the Centre's operation. The city of Cölbe was impressed by the speed with which their partners had acted.

For Kościerzyna, however, this was just the beginning. In the coming months their focus will be on developing the service provided by the Energy Advice Centre further. How can the consultations be improved? How can one track which actions are actually implemented? How can advisors reach out to residents more actively? These are the questions Energy Advisor Ewelina Labuda and her colleagues are currently addressing.

The partnership brings new ideas and knowhow

Some initial answers have emerged from the cooperation. Birgit Herbst, Environmental and Climate Change

Mitigation Officer in the city of Nidda, Hesse and expert on public participation in low-emission actions, was invited to the last partnership meeting. She spoke about simple yet effective, and above all transferable actions, such as going door-to-door providing advice on energy issues in a selected district. She also recommended using a wider range of information formats, such as newsletters, postcards and "thermal imaging walks".

On the initiative of Cölbe, the energy efficiency expert Werner Eicke-Henning was also invited to the meeting. He gave both municipalities valuable tips – and much food for thought. For staff normally very busy with their day-to-day work, the meetings were a welcome opportunity for consulting, capacity-building and inspiration.

The "Wärmewende" – both partners are on the ball

Exchange on technical topics would not have been possible without the help of professional translators. Although the Mayor of Kościerzyna speaks fluent German, and a native of Kościerzyna has long been actively involved in Cölbe's partnership association, staff lacked a common language when it came to technical matters. This hampered communication and slowed down the development of the project. Nevertheless, with the help of translators it was possible to agree short-term and long-term goals for the partnership. Kościerzyna plans to use a post card campaign to encourage residents to get involved in low-emission actions. Municipalities plan to inform residents via a newsletter which low-emission activities take place in the partner municipality, particularly in the area of energy-based modernisation. In this way the partners hope to inspire local citizens. There is also interest on both sides in the idea of carrying out pilot modernisation projects.

All good things take time... and require the right conditions

The speed with which this project takes shape will depend on various factors. Elections are pending in both municipalities and availability of technical staff in the administrations is still low. But the will is there, and the municipalities have managed to arouse the interest of local residents. A public event entitled “Is it worth carrying out energy modernisation in my house?”, held during the last partnership meeting in cooperation with Energieinstitut Hessen (the Hesse Energy Institute) and Volksbank in Cölbe, attracted many interested people – despite the temptation to go out and enjoy the early summer weather. One attendee asked, “Are you still looking for pilot houses for energy-based modernisation?” Local residents, it would seem, have already caught the low-emission economy bug.

Szczytno (Warmia-Masuria) & Herten (North Rhine-Westphalia)

If anyone knows that drive and perseverance pay off, it is Babette Nieder. Babette is Managing Director of Herten Beteiligungsgesellschaft mbH, and thanks to her commitment and involvement over many years, the city of Herten is today regarded as a pioneer in the field of low-emission economies. Herten is a Masterplan Municipality, a German Energy Agency (dena) Energy Efficiency Municipality and a finalist in the German Sustainability Award. This former mining town in the heart of the Ruhr Valley is 100-percent committed to the energy transition. And all this despite tight budgets: Herten is one of the most indebted municipalities in Germany.

When Babette heard about the German-Polish project and the possibility of deepening the existing town twinning, she did not hesitate: She offered to host the project’s first consultation meeting gathering all participants and then applied for the municipal climate partnership programme, together with the partner municipality Szczytno.

Things continued at the same pace. At the meetings that followed, the two cities quickly identified overarching goals for the cooperation (lowering energy consumption, cutting costs, reducing CO2 emissions) and defined education, households, companies and public buildings as areas for action.

Taking school partnerships in a new direction

It was a natural decision to include schools in the cooperation as school exchanges between the two municipalities were already well established. In late September 2017, Polish schoolchildren came to Herten and saw a low-emission economy in action. They visited the high school’s greenhouse for the school garden, which also doubles as a small-scaled hybrid power plant powered by wind, solar and biogas – and went on an exploratory tour with the city’s climate team. The children learned about hydrogen technology and how to generate power from sewage. As they climbed the Tetrahedron – the look-out tower of a former coal mine, and a regional landmark – they learned about the transformation of the entire region’s energy supply.

After this successful start, the question arose as to how to deepen and consolidate the exchange. The visits between the schools were not without problems: Poland went through a major school reform in 2017, leaving teachers little time for extra-curricular activities. In Herten, some low-emission projects were already up and running in schools but without a cross-border component.

adelphi's suggestion was to make use of the EU's eTwinning programme, which provides free digital solutions to the challenges facing schools. Learning materials can still be developed together but without the need for physical exchange. The town of Gelsenkirchen, which neighbours Herten, had already developed a project related to sustainability using this platform. Thanks to support from the Programme Ambassador in Poland, some teachers from Szczytno took part in an eTwinning training course in the spring of 2018. For her part, Babette exchanged ideas with the school in Gelsenkirchen. The first request for contact between the teachers was sent via the eTwinning platform shortly before the end of the consultation project. After the summer holidays, the teachers will have the opportunity to use the framework to collaborate and develop projects.

Incorporating technical knowledge

In addition to the school exchanges, the representatives of the two municipalities also wanted to use the partnership for exchange at a technical level. Szczytno was particularly interested in Herten's expertise in energy efficiency measures. They mentioned their desire for an energy consultation programme early on, but this first needed to be more specific: what target groups could be addressed and what experiences from Herten would be helpful?

In spring 2018 there was good news from Szczytno: a decision had been made to launch a new programme called "Clean air: it's worth it!". The programme aims to promote the replacement of inefficient, coal-fired boilers in private households. The first applications could be submitted in September 2018. Herten suggested sharing with Szczytno its experience with the "Heizungscheck" (Heating Check) programme and its vulnerability analysis of heat generation, transfer and distribution.

Detlef Becker, a specialist in building damage and modernisation who runs Heizungscheck training sessions, introduced the programme at the most recent meeting of the municipal partnership in Szczytno. Intense discussion continued over dinner. Both sides had questions about regulatory issues and current practice in the two countries. The conclusion? Implementing a vulnerability analysis similar to "Heizungscheck" in Szczytno could lead to a higher rate of boilers being exchanged and more new connections to the district heating network. Could this be a new idea for the exchange?

After dinner, the group took a walk past one of the two lakes in the heart of the town. The evening was calm, the air warm. The heat wave had already begun. Lilianna Majewska-Farjan, Deputy Director of Szczytno's Department of Land Use and Environmental Protection, thought back on what they had discussed during the day. "What we need is an extra person in the environmental team," she says. The will is there, but unfortunately capacity is often lacking. Full desks are the biggest challenge for the bilateral exchange and implementation of new ideas.

Sztum (Pomerania) & Ritterhude (Lower Saxony)

"I'll have to think about that. Fortunately, thinking is one of my favourite things to do!" With this attitude, plenty of humour and a great deal of determination, Michał Mroczkowski, a young Energy Inspector from Sztum, has managed to realise in record time an ambitious project put forward by the Mayor of Sztum, Leszek Tabor. Thanks to Michał's efforts, nine private households and a rectory in Sztum may soon be saving up to 35 tonnes of CO₂ a year. How has this all come about?

Energy-based modernisation – a workshop by adelphi and PNEC bears fruit

The story begins in December 2015 in Herten, North Rhine-Westphalia. Leszek is one of the representatives participating in the first German-Polish workshop run by adelphi and PNEC. On the agenda is the topic of energy-based modernisation at a district level. On the final day, the 20-strong delegation visits the former mining settlement of Hassel.Westerholt.Bertlich, which is being modernised along with Gelsenkirchen. The municipalities want to create incentives for modernising the entire building stock, while ensuring the homogeneous appearance of the historic district is preserved. Leszek stands at the front and listens intently to the architect who is speaking. The Mayor of Sztum is so enthusiastic about the idea that he decides to promote the energy-based modernisation of single-family homes at district level in his municipality, too.

From Germany to Poland – and back to Germany: the birth of two new projects

Back in Sztum, Leszek and his team identify a district of the municipality that has suffered particularly badly from structural neglect and where particulate matter pollution is also at its highest. He contacts Susanne Geils, the Mayor of Ritterhude, whom he has known for many years due to the town twinning. They decide to participate in the German-Polish municipal climate partnership programme. Right from the first meeting of the partners, Susanne recognises the need for an energy-based modernisation of the city, and also its political relevance, and wants to take a more determined approach to the issue of the "Wärmewende" (transition in the heating sector) in Ritterhude, too. The two partner municipalities decide to pursue similar goals in a joint approach in the near future and to share their knowledge and experience with each other along the way.

Combating energy poverty – a difficult process

In Sztum, the development of the project is in the hands of Michał Mroczkowski. Together with Ulrich Müller, a local consultant from Ritterhude, he discusses issues affecting both projects. It is not just about saving energy and, in the case of Sztum, reducing particulate matter pollution from old coal stoves: it is also about combating energy poverty in the long term. In addition, it is necessary to create suitable incentives for modernising the district so as to increase willingness to invest.

Michał, who is a young father of seven, is not lacking in energy. He knocks on many doors. He learns from the Polish Environmental Bank that loans are available for households at lower interest rates. A key requirement for this is that an energy audit is carried out first. It is decided to perform an energy audit in ten pilot projects using funds from the project. In order to identify suitable

households and get a better idea of the needs of local residents, a survey is carried out in the selected district in the spring of 2018. This elicits important information about the technical condition of the buildings and the owners' awareness of the issues and willingness to invest. Following an evaluation of the survey results, nine private households and a rectory are selected.

In parallel, Michał turns to the Polish Ministry of the Environment. At first, things do not look too promising: it is well known that no subsidies exist for energy-based modernisation of single-family houses. But Michał's perseverance pays off. In early 2018, the fight against air pollution becomes a national priority. Through telephone calls and meetings in Warsaw, Michał finds out that a funding programme specifically for private households is due to be launched in September 2018. Thanks to the energy audits, all nine pilot households meet the application requirements. The rectory can turn to the Polish Environmental Bank for assistance. The energy audits show for these ten pilot projects, with a total investment of PLN 293,000 (approximately EUR 68,000), energy consumption could be cut by almost half, or around 390,000 GJ a year.

Leszek and Michał hope that a public meeting in autumn 2018 will attract the interest of even more residents of Sztum, who will then decide to carry out energy-based modernisations of their homes with the help of the new funding programme. This would further increase the impact of the consulting project.

Ritterhude is also pressing ahead

The desire for change is also strong in Ritterhude. Currently the municipality is working on a funding application to the KfW (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, the German government-owned development bank) for an integrated district modernisation concept and a mod-

ernisation management system. The programme has already delivered many success stories in Germany, and Ritterhude also has big plans. A building energy register was compiled a few years ago, so a detailed typology and analysis of buildings in the target area was already available – about 60 hectares with houses built between 1955 and 1980. So after submitting the application, it's fingers crossed!

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