30 years working towards energy self-sufficiency
Beckerich, Luxemburg
Mayor Camille Gira

Heading a small town is probably easier than managing a large city. But what really matters is the willingness to make change happen. In 1982 Camille Gira joined the proactive team of Beckerich Municipal Council with plenty of ideas about sustainability and energy-efficiency. 30 years later, as a Mayor, he not only sees tangible results all around the town but also a real commitment from Beckerich’s inhabitants towards sustainability issues. The current goal is to make Beckerich energy self-sufficient by 2025.

After years of active climate protection policy, joining the Covenant of Mayors and adopting a Sustainable Energy Action Plan gave us the occasion to make an evaluation of our work so far, to see these fields where we have been successful, but also the elements to be improved. Camille Gira, Mayor of Beckerich.

Beckerich is a town of 2,300 people in western Luxemburg. The name might sound familiar given that Beckerich has a drinking water production plant which supplies LIDL supermarkets with water all over Europe. However, Beckerich is also renowned for the different actions undertaken in the field of energy-efficiency since the 80s, when a group of self-motivated citizens decided to stop the growing migration flows by creating jobs and offering a better standard of living in the town itself. Today Beckerich produces 90% of its low-tension electricity needs and 30% of its heating demand. How did it get there?

In 2004, 19 farmers founded a biogas cooperative, treating manure to produce energy. The total investment amounted to € 5 million, being 50% funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and 50% financed by a loan. Each farmer also contributed with an investment of €4,000 (i.e. €76,000 in total). Nowadays the cooperative produces electricity and hot water for some 700 families delivered through 14km of district heating pipes. The municipality buys the heat produced and resells it to the citizens.
In 2010 the municipality was able to raise €400,000 by selling heat, while each family saved around €500.

In 2008, a wood incinerator plant for heat energy was created as another alternative energy source. The wood comes from the 700 hectares of Beckerich’s forests, out of which 400 hectares belong to 260 private owners. The municipality developed an exchange system based on a 15-year contract with forest owners who benefit from a discount on their energy bill in exchange for providing wood to the incinerator. At present, 150 homes are being heated with this system, which produces around 30% of heat consumed in the town. Friendly prices were set for low-income households so that every person can access the system.

What makes Beckerich’s alternative-energy solutions so popular is the fact that they meet several objectives at the same time: there is a reduction in CO₂ emissions, jobs are created at the local level and money re-injected in the local economy. Indeed, the citizens buy the heat produced by local producers, keeping the investment in the town instead of paying petrol producers outside Europe.

At the moment, 15% of Beckerich’s households have invested on photovoltaic panels and/or thermal insulation and are proud to display the little “Our energy comes from the sun” sign, on their doors. An incentive of €38 is also given to citizens that buy an energy-friendly fridge and other household appliances. Small actions such as these are what make the difference in Beckerich’s long term vision for energy self-sufficiency.

Beckerich – Key facts
- 2,300 inhabitants
- The municipality’s 700 households are spread across eight small villages
- 90% autonomous in terms of energy consumption (low-tension electricity)
- The electricity consumption has decreased by 7% in Beckerich since 1994 while it has increased 2 to 3% in the rest of the country
- Joined the Covenant of Mayors in 2008

As a signatory of the Covenant of Mayors, Beckerich voluntarily commits to reducing its CO₂ emissions by 30% by 2020.

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