



# Q&A summary

Ready4NetZero webinars questions and answers sessions

#1 webinar  
19.09.2023

Longterm approach: A possible way to self-sufficiency and climate  
neutrality

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6. Is it really possible for mankind to stop the temperature increase by 2 degrees Celsius in the long term? How do you see it at a personal level?

**1. To what extent do your interests conflict with the profit motives of a grid or electricity company, and has there been any alteration in the fees they impose for your grid usage?**

Historically, we faced the challenge of selling electricity at a lower price and buying it at a higher one. To address this, we aim to establish our storage system, specifically utilizing a power-to-gas system. This system will store electricity for a month, providing independence from external grids. Currently, we use the public grid as our external storage, selling excess electricity and purchasing when needed. The plan is to replace this external storage with our own, but administrative hurdles, such as understanding why we pay for self-produced electricity, need resolution. Navigating taxes and transmission fees when transitioning from production to storage is a political issue, and our representatives are working towards a solution. Political clearance is crucial, and this matter requires prompt clarification.

**2. How far does Pfaffenhoffen see itself as a leader? Who is a good example for you? What is the percentage of such front-runner cities in Germany?**

Firstly, we don't consider ourselves leaders. Though we initially led in some aspects, it was due to circumstances rather than intentional leadership. Unlike some cities in Germany that have achieved self-sufficiency, we are still on that journey. We're selective, cherry-picking the best solutions suited to our situation, combining electricity production from one source and energy storage from another. Rather than having a single ideal city to emulate, we adapt by choosing what is most suitable for our specific circumstances.

**3. How can local authorities be taught to think about projects that aim at a time that is longer than the electoral cycle?**

The responsibility lies with community leaders to make decisive choices. In our town, the decision to pursue our path towards sustainability was backed by unanimous support from the entire city council, including a diverse coalition of parties. This consensus reflects a shared commitment to our collective future. Even if the majority changes in future elections, there is confidence that the ongoing commitment to sustainability would likely continue, given the understanding and support of the public.

**4. What would be the maximum percentage of solar energy in Romania's Energy Mix so as not to create imbalances in the National system and to obtain maximum efficiency?**

Based on my general experience, I'd estimate that achieving around 40% solar energy could be feasible in Romania. However, it's important to note that solar power is available mainly during the day and in summer. While solar requires storage, it can be complemented well by wind energy, especially in Central Europe where wind is more prevalent in winter. Both solar and wind are volatile, requiring storage solutions, and the extent of storage depends on

economic considerations and willingness to invest. Alternatively, accepting a seasonal imbalance and utilizing other resources, such as burning wood residues, can provide additional energy sources.

**5. What is the role contribution of solar energy in achieving climate neutrality compared to other renewable energy sources, and what are its limitations?**

The advantages of solar energy are evident: the sun doesn't send a bill, and solar power itself is free. While the installation costs are necessary, unlike paying for oil or gas, there's no direct cost for sunlight. However, solar energy has limitations, such as its volatility and intermittent availability compared to constant sources like water. Despite these constraints, solar energy remains cost-effective, with solar panels becoming even more affordable over the past few decades, partly due to the availability of cheaper Chinese panels. When combined with wind energy, it provides a balanced solution to some extent.

**6. Is it really possible for mankind to stop the temperature increase by 2 degrees Celsius in the long term? How do you see it at a personal level?**

While it's technically possible to achieve a common approach for climate goals, I doubt mankind will unite without experiencing significant consequences. People often only learn from catastrophes, and the current level of urgency may not be enough to foster collaboration. Existing institutions, like the United Nations, may be too weak to enforce such a collective effort. While Germany, with its strong economy, could potentially lead the way and demonstrate the feasibility of climate goals for an industrial state, it would require significantly more effort than current initiatives. Unfortunately, with the current German climate protection goals, achieving the 1.5-degree or even the 2-degree target seems unlikely, emphasizing that the challenge is more of a human issue than a technical one.

## #2 webinar

21.11.2023

# Financing climate transition

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1. What is the approach of Zagreb City in regards to involving citizens and relevant stakeholders in the co-design and co-implementation of local climate energy strategies, and how is the integration of actions related to climate and clean energy transition achieved in practice?
3. What's the primary funding source for climate projects and energy transition in Zagreb? What percentage of EU grants received is non-reimbursable? Does the city allocate a specific percentage of its local budget or a fixed amount for environmental project financing?
4. What are the main sources of funding used by city of Zagreb for renewable energy?
5. What is the city's heating/ cooling strategy?
6. What are the most efficient technical solutions for reducing energy consumption in public building such as schools?
7. What were the main obstacles incurred, and what were the solutions in the city approach to implementing climate neutrality strategies?



1. **What is the approach of Zagreb City in regards to involving citizens and relevant stakeholders in the co-design and co-implementation of local climate energy strategies, and how is the integration of actions related to climate and clean energy transition achieved in practice?**

Zagreb has embraced its SECAP (Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan), involving citizens in its development through public consultation. The city aspires to engage citizens not only as stakeholders but also as co-investors in energy projects. Initially focusing on PV plants, the city plans a sell-and-lease-back model. The city company invests, sells the PV system to citizens, offering a guaranteed rate of return. This reflects Zagreb's commitment to elevated citizen involvement beyond strategic document development.

2. **Which renewable energy source does city of Zagreb use?**

Zagreb uses a fairly large proportion of energy produced by PV systems. At the same time, the city's heating system is centralised and has maximum efficiency. There is also geothermal potential, but it is used sporadically in sports facilities and swimming pools.

3. **What's the primary funding source for climate projects and energy transition in Zagreb? What percentage of EU grants received is non-reimbursable? Does the city allocate a specific percentage of its local budget or a fixed amount for environmental project financing?**

Climate change mitigation and adaptation entail different financing approaches. Mitigation allows for diverse financial models, including private partnerships, potentially making projects financially viable without subsidies. Conversely, adaptation relies on grants and public funds, as it lacks the energy savings characteristic of mitigation projects. Funding percentages vary based on specific programs and EU access to strategic and investment funding, structural funds, and cohesion funds. Consultation with Ministries and operational programs is necessary for country-specific details. The city budget lacks a fixed amount or percentage for environmental projects but includes dedicated euros for Energy Efficiency and renewable initiatives without specified percentages.

4. **What are the main sources of funding used by city of Zagreb for renewable energy?**

Zagreb is in the final stages of negotiating a framework loan with the European Investment Bank (EIB) for Energy Efficiency projects. The EIB not only offers ELENA support but also provides low-interest loans to the public sector. The negotiated framework loan, with a generous 5-year grace period and a lower interest rate than any commercial bank in Croatia, presents favourable conditions for a significant investment. The city aims to secure over 400 million euros for Energy Efficiency projects through this agreement.

**5. What is the city's heating/ cooling strategy?**

Zagreb lacks a dedicated heating and cooling strategy but incorporates related measures in its SECAP. The city does not control the district heating system, owned by the national utility, which covers 35-40% of customers. Developing a strategy for this utility's district heating wouldn't be practical for Zagreb. The majority of customers use natural gas or electricity, with minimal reliance on heating oil and biomass. The city owns the natural gas supply company, currently undergoing restructuring and formulating a strategy to transition away from natural gas, though details are still pending.

**6. What are the most efficient technical solutions for reducing energy consumption in public building such as schools?**

Addressing two aspects is crucial. Firstly, the energy retrofit involves constructing new installations, windows, and heating/cooling systems. Secondly, measuring energy consumption, indoor quality, temperature, and CO<sub>2</sub> levels is essential to influence user behaviour. Simply retrofitting the building without addressing behaviour change may lead to lower-than-planned savings due to the rebound effect, where users increase energy usage post-retrofit. It's vital to focus on both retrofitting and behavioural aspects for effective outcomes.

**7. What were the main obstacles incurred, and what were the solutions in the city approach to implementing climate neutrality strategies?**

The main obstacles are lack of knowledge, lack of capacity, and lack of education, related to many parts of the implementation of these projects, not just technical but financial. If it's a project regarding the wider public then you have to educate the public.

#3 webinar  
09.01.2024

## Navigating Challenges in Citizen Participation for Climate Neutrality

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1. What were your methods to engage non-interested stakeholders and raise their awareness or even penetrate the opposition?
2. Have citizens in your municipalities initiated climate neutrality strategies independently, or is it rather a process driven by city or municipal administration?
3. How are German citizens attracted to participatory processes, and do they maintain communication with local regional administrations?
4. Have you incorporated attractive incentives, such as free food and drinks, appealing locations, or free access to museums and galleries, to encourage participation in climate initiatives?





**1. What were your methods to engage non-interested stakeholders and raise their awareness or even penetrate the opposition?**

Thomas Weiß: In the context of mobility concepts, we conducted various workshops involving diverse participants. Despite encountering opposition, particularly from those resistant to changes like increased bike and pedestrian traffic, we engaged in discussions and workshops. There wasn't a universal approach; convincing individuals depended on the specific issue. In some instances, opponents observed majority support for new ideas among workshop participants, leading them to eventually accept the changes. The process involved arguments and persuasion, though the effectiveness varied.

**2. Have citizens in your municipalities initiated climate neutrality strategies independently, or is it rather a process driven by city or municipal administration?**

Andreas Witte: Addressing citizen involvement in climate strategies is challenging for us as a County Administration overseeing about 34 municipalities. The geographical spread, with distances up to 80 kilometres, necessitates events in various regions. The first challenge is disseminating information county-wide, given the impracticality of a centralized approach. Additionally, organizing a series of events over a few months encounters decreasing participation after the initial session. The difficulty lies in engaging with the same familiar participants, predominantly older white men, hindering diverse and innovative solutions.

Wilhelm Shulz: The challenges persist, even after hosting successful conferences. While special events like these attract attention, they often involve the same voices, leading to predictability in responses. Engaging people creatively is difficult, and traditional methods yield limited qualitative data. For instance, an innovative approach involves creating a cozy space in town where residents can share their thoughts on climate neutrality. However, implementing such ideas is hindered by time and resource constraints. Hiring external support may be an option for those with the necessary resources.

Thomas Weiß: In a municipality, the dynamics differ from a district, allowing for more direct contact with residents. For instance, in Kempten, ongoing collaboration with a future-oriented citizen organisation, Earth Hour events, and initiatives like "Omas for Future" demonstrates active community engagement. Bimonthly climate talks involving experts and psychologists help bridge the gap between knowledge and action. Despite these efforts, the challenge remains in diversifying participation and ensuring broader representation beyond the familiar faces in the community discussions. Additionally, catastrophic events like heavy rain further motivate certain citizens, but there's a need to broaden the spectrum of voices to truly represent public views.

3. How are German citizens attracted to participatory processes, and do they maintain communication with local regional administrations?

**Thomas Weiß:** We aim to engage young people in Kempton by collaborating with approximately 20 schools, ranging from elementary to secondary. Thankfully, some teachers are passionate about climate protection and integrate these topics into the school curriculum. During events organized by Climate Protection Management, we make a deliberate effort to involve students, recognizing the significance of engaging the younger generation. However, attracting older individuals to these discussions and events remains challenging. While this insight may not fully represent the entire population, it serves as a starting point.

**Andreas Witte:** Engaging the entire spectrum of society, from older individuals to younger people and children, is challenging yet crucial. Our efforts extend to different age groups, recognizing the importance of reaching all segments of society. While we take pride in being world champions in basketball, the fight against climate change requires a global collaboration since climate issues know no borders. Despite the difficulties, our daily work involves infiltrating people's minds and ensuring that climate concerns remain a constant consideration. One of our challenges in the county is the lack of direct connection to initiatives like Fridays for Future or Scientists for Future. While these movements are active in larger cities, our rural region with 34 municipalities feels somewhat disconnected. Despite people from our region participating in these initiatives, their activities are centered in larger cities, leading to a disconnect between regional engagement and these city-based movements.

**Wilhelm Shulz:** Engaging younger individuals poses a significant challenge, and as one of the youngest participants in various meetings, I am particularly aware of this. To involve young people, we've implemented measures such as student assemblies, where we simulate communal political sessions in schools. During these assemblies, students propose measures, and the top-voted ones are presented to county politicians for consideration and potential implementation. This process not only values the students' input but also educates them about political processes. However, the challenge persists, as the same familiar faces often attend events. Traditional information dissemination channels, such as social media, may not reach all demographics effectively, highlighting the need for diverse outreach strategies.

4. Have you incorporated attractive incentives, such as free food and drinks, appealing locations, or free access to museums and galleries, to encourage participation in climate initiatives?

**Wilhelm Shulz:** We always provide free food and drinks at events, though we haven't explicitly advertised it. Offering incentives like vouchers for online focus groups or providing meals during offline sessions is crucial for engagement. However, administratively, it can be challenging, and we need creative ways to keep participants motivated. For instance, we bring Haribo candy during sessions to maintain energy and excitement, emphasizing the need to harness momentum and avoid losing engagement over time.

**Andreas Witte:** My experience shows that people are more likely to get involved when they receive something for free. For instance, during funding programs, we offered small gadgets like a heating pump, generating significant interest and contacts. Providing free services, such as consultancy for house rebuilding, also garnered a substantial response. It seems that, particularly with decision-makers, offering tangible benefits can be an effective strategy to engage them in climate initiatives.

**Thomas Weiß:** I would like to add that, in my experience, engaging students and pupils involves emphasizing that climate protection and adaptation can be enjoyable. Taking them to local markets, exploring various offers, or visiting an organic farm can create lasting memories and contribute to their understanding of these issues. While financial incentives may be essential for adults, creating enjoyable experiences seems more impactful for younger generations.

#4 webinar  
31.01.2024

Innovative Energy Systems and Economic Growth: The Rhein-  
Hunsrück-Kreis Model

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1. How has the municipality addressed the challenge of limited budgets and a lack of internal experts over the years? Have you been successful in developing a local economy to support the implementation of different solutions, or is there still a reliance on importing expert knowledge?
2. Have you implemented proposals submitted by citizens in the transformation process, and do you have specific activities that encourage citizens to contribute their ideas?
3. What were the main challenges and frustrations you faced during your two-decade-long work on this topic, and how did you overcome them?
4. Which energy system did you find to be the most CO<sub>2</sub>-efficient for meeting the energy needs of a residential building?
5. Is the availability of financing and funding a crucial factor to consider, given the clear economic benefits, especially since many citizens may find it challenging to afford upfront investments in such initiatives?
6. Have the economic value creation initiatives in your rural district had an impact on demographic trends, particularly in addressing the common challenge of migration, especially among the working-age population?



1. **How has the municipality addressed the challenge of limited budgets and a lack of internal experts over the years? Have you been successful in developing a local economy to support the implementation of different solutions, or is there still a reliance on importing expert knowledge?**

The municipality faced challenges such as limited budgets and a lack of internal experts. Success in overcoming these challenges involved having passionate leaders who inspired others. Financial constraints were addressed by prioritizing passion over immediate resources. Working in non-partisan collaboration was emphasized to avoid political divisions. Networking and partnerships, built over 20-30 years, played a crucial role. Engaging citizens through initiatives like bulb replacement days contributed to economic success. Coordinating with cooperatives for projects, even when lacking funds, enabled progress. While learning from experiences and attending conferences, the municipality gradually developed a comprehensive approach, relying on local resources and fostering economic resilience.

2. **Have you implemented proposals submitted by citizens in the transformation process, and do you have specific activities that encourage citizens to contribute their ideas?**

Yes, we have had numerous private initiatives reaching out to us. While lacking financial resources, our municipality, as an administration with strong governmental connections, served as a hub to bring these initiatives together. The impetus often comes directly from the citizens, and we recognize the importance of collaborating with private activities and supporting the active groups forming in the municipalities.

3. **What were the main challenges and frustrations you faced during your two-decade-long work on this topic, and how did you overcome them?**

Overcoming the initial years, we confronted a lack of know-how and complications. It was particularly challenging as there were no specialists in the administration. We encountered trouble with individuals focused on monument protection and faced issues with the data protection manager concerning PV capacity. Additionally, attempts to repurpose an old landfill for PV were initially denied. Despite these challenges, our conviction, passion, and hope for the future helped us overcome these problems. My advice for others is to collaborate with like-minded partners, start with energy efficiency, attend conferences for best practices, and focus on regional added value and citizen participation.

**4. Which energy system did you find to be the most CO<sub>2</sub>-efficient for meeting the energy needs of a residential building?**

It depends on various factors such as the building's age, winter temperature, occupancy, heating source, and the availability of a heating network. For a personalized recommendation, consulting with a specialized engineer is essential. Personally, I am considering a combination of gas and a heat pump for my house. However, this choice is subjective and may not be suitable for everyone, as it involves substantial upfront costs. The decision should be based on individual circumstances and future energy cost projections.

**5. Is the availability of financing and funding a crucial factor to consider, given the clear economic benefits, especially since many citizens may find it challenging to afford upfront investments in such initiatives?**

To achieve financial sustainability, focus on practical changes like upgrading heating every 20-30 years or adopting renewable energy sources. Smaller, cost-effective steps are more feasible than a 300,000 EUR house renovation. Some municipalities invested 200,000 EUR in grants, generating almost 1 million EUR in citizen investments.

Over 30 years, advancements like the internet and best practices have simplified navigating legislation and financing. Government programs and subsidies further simplify the process. Despite energy independence and success, the journey towards renewable energy is ongoing. Continuous communication with mayors and citizens, sharing experiences, and receiving awards contribute to the district's progress.

**6. Have the economic value creation initiatives in your rural district had an impact on demographic trends, particularly in addressing the common challenge of migration, especially among the working-age population?**

We face similar challenges to other districts in Germany. Thirty years ago, we had issues due to an influx of people from the old Soviet Union, particularly Kazakhstan, totalling 16,000. Currently, there is a new wave of migration, notably from Ukraine, posing a considerable challenge. Despite the economic benefits of climate protection initiatives, it's insufficient to cover all social expenses, leading to financial constraints.

## Partners:



[www.ready4netzero.eu](http://www.ready4netzero.eu)

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