

ElektrizitätsWerke Schönau: a citizens-driven energy company

📍 → SCHÖNAU, GERMANY

KEYWORDS: COMMUNITY ENERGY;

DURATION: Since 1997

WHO: Energy company and residents

BUDGET: Unknown

SUMMARY

Elektrizitätswerke Schönau (EWS) is an energy supply company located in Schönau (Germany) in the Black Forest region. It was established in 1994 by a group of citizens - the “Parents for a nuclear-free future” association. The company operates the local power grid, sells green electricity throughout Germany and advocates a renewable energy supply. Since 1988, the changes in the regulation of the electricity market allowed EWS to supply its costumers with electricity generated from renewable and cogeneration sources. These sources are photovoltaic, wind energy, biogas, hydropower plants and power from small cogeneration units (generation of electricity and heat in just one device). Later on, EWS became a national scale electricity supplier. The company’s model is not only based on obtaining energy from renewable sources but also promoting the reduction of energy consumption and advocating for the energy transition.

GOALS

- Contribute to the energy transition by generating 100% renewable energy in Germany;
- Decentralise the generation of energy, promote energy savings and increase energy efficiency;
- Subsidise the installation and use of cogeneration units and actively promote the creation of local energy cooperatives;
- Generate new jobs by decentralizing the energy and by promoting a sustainable economic model.
- Remain visible and active in the public sphere by campaigning against nuclear energy and by contributing to political debates on the energy transition.



Credits : EWS



HOW IT WORKS

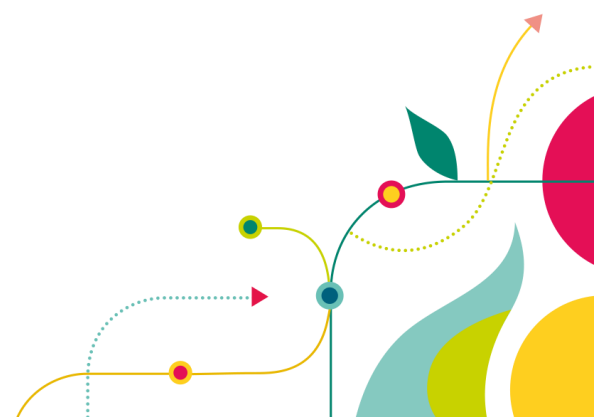
- A group of **anti-nuclear activists** created EWS as a small and local renewable energy supplier. The first action they implemented was to take over the local grid to make it available for community use.
- When the German electricity market was deregulated in 1998, EWS took the opportunity to supply customers in Schönau exclusively with electricity generated from renewable and co-generation sources.

"...Our cooperative is committed to the energy transition and a complete and efficient energy supply based on renewable energies. Civic engagement, codetermination and decentralization are among the cornerstones of our entrepreneurial activities"

→ **ElektrizitätsWerke Schönau**

- In 1999, when the German electricity market was opened up to private households, EWS began to supply customers with **green electricity on a nationwide scale**.
- EWS activities, based on **rigorous environmental criteria**, are the following: exclude the supply of electricity from nuclear and coal-fired power plants, subsidize renewable energy systems, reduce electricity consumption and develop climate-friendly cogeneration units.
- EWS supplies approximately 160,000 households in about 800 grid areas across Germany. Since March 2015, EWS has been selling gas on a nationwide scale, serving around 11,000 natural and biogas customers.
- Since 2011, EWS has created a new legal entity: EWS Energie GmbH that designs, funds, builds and operates environmentally friendly power generation units. EWS Energie aims to subsidise local cooperatives and gives the opportunity to local citizens' energy co-operatives to acquire shares.

EWS supports the local economy by creating jobs, business activities and tax revenues for the local authority. The town council of Schönau has become highly aware of sustainability issues and has adopted a sustainable development political strategy.



TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

EWS is **more than an energy supplier**: the company aims to foster a deep change in society by encouraging citizens to take action towards the energy transition.

The company contributes to accelerate sustainability transformation by fostering community participation in **energy prosumerism** and by engaging the local authority. EWS shows the potential of bottom-up initiatives to be scaled at the national level and to increase sustainability awareness of local authorities and residents as well as contributing to enhance the local economy. The EWS model can be inspiring for grassroots innovations or companies that could replicate this model in other contexts.

MORE INFORMATION

[ElektrizitätsWerke Schönau's website](#)

[The Energy Transition Chronicles](#), Energy Cities

