

Flash-Talk of the district administrator of Lörrach, Marion Dammann

Bonsoir à tous et toutes,

Grüezi,

Einen wunderschönen guten Abend sehr geehrte Damen und Herren!

Ladies and gentlemen,

dear friends of the European Energy Award,

I am pleased and I feel very honored to welcome you to this wonderful event. It is indeed a special honor, that the Association European Energy Award has chosen the city of Lörrach and as well the County of Lörrach for its Gold Event 2023.

I hope you all have had an interesting day today, may it be in our neighborhood in Switzerland or in France or may it be in the Lörrach-County itself. You can be assured that I will dwell on this „trilateral character“ of your event again a bit later.

At this point, I would first like to welcome your President, Mrs Gudrun Heute-Bluhm, who can be called a pioneer of the European Energy Award in Germany - especially here in Lörrach. Dear Gudrun, thank you very much for this wonderful event and for the invitation, which I was very pleased to accept.

Of course, I would also like to join Mrs Heute-Bluhm in warmly welcoming the other members of the Board of the European Energy Award Association as well as the district administrators, mayors and all representatives of towns and municipalities who are receiving the Gold Award today. A warm welcome to the district of Lörrach and the town of Lörrach. I am delighted that Mrs Staub-Abt, representing the town of Lörrach, is able to celebrate with us this evening.

I would also like to welcome Mr Heinz-Werner Hölscher, CEO of Badenova AG und Co KG and Mr Jörg Reichert, Chairman of the Management Board of Energiedienst Holding AG with the new name Naturenergie. The two gentlemen, who represent our local energy supply companies, have founded a joint energy agency together with the districts of Lörrach and Waldshut. It is a rarity for two competing energy suppliers to set up an energy agency together with the districts. In view of the major energy challenges of our time, we are therefore very proud that we have succeeded in doing this.

I am delighted that we can all enjoy this evening together with the large international eea family. I would like to congratulate all eea participants who are receiving a gold award today from the bottom of my heart.

It is not my place this evening to give the laudatory speech on your commitment and achievements, but one thing is clear: a great deal has to be achieved to receive the highest honour and greatest commendation from the European Energy Award!

You and the cities, municipalities and districts, you represent all this - not because of the European Energy Award, but with the European Energy Award. As a representative of an eea district, I too am not interested in winning gold and silver, but above all in achieving targets in various fields of action on the basis of a good structure. I am sure that this also applies to you, because we all share a special concern for climate protection at local authority level and this is something that should and does attract attention, especially across generations and beyond the purely official sphere.

We European municipalities, as the lower level of state institutions, but also the one closest to the citizens, must ask ourselves: "Who, if not us?"

Who should undertake the transformation to a climate-neutral community if not us Europeans as a wealthy, technically savvy, (relatively) stable society?

Who should set an example of practical climate protection if not a municipality, a city or a district as a still manageable actor that relates to a specific neighbourhood?

Who is supposed to take the steps towards transformation - huge changes to our economy and our personal behaviour - together with the citizens, if not the municipality in which we live?

Unfortunately, I cannot claim that the issue of climate protection is so democratically anchored that it would be a sure-fire success. That's why cities, municipalities and rural districts in particular need to not leave people alone with their concerns about climate change and to engage with residents in order to meet the demands of our time.

As the district administrator of a district that is due to be certified in the eea for the third time this year, but has unfortunately not yet achieved gold status, I would like to congratulate the municipalities being honoured today once again, because they can be proud of what they have achieved, pause for a moment and take in what you, your employees and your residents have contributed to our future and our well-being.

Please allow me to elaborate a little on the significance of the European Energy Award.

It is indeed always necessary to ask critical questions, for example whether a certification system and the hunt for points are perhaps the wrong approach. These questions arise against the background that I outlined earlier, namely that we want to protect the climate not because of the eea, but with it. It would be very nice if this idea were to be taken up with the eea 3.0, which sees greenhouse neutrality as the decisive, evaluative goal.

Personally, I have been involved with the eea system for many years now. Initially, as mayor of the town of Lörrach at the time, I was able to transition with Mrs Heute-Bluhm from the Energy City label to the new format, the European Energy Award, which has continued to grow, particularly in the state of Baden-Württemberg. As District Administrator of the district of Lörrach, I was happy to take on this role and go through the eea process with the district council and the administration. Due to the success of the city, there was not so much convincing to do.

Given that I have been familiar with the European Energy Award for a long time, I claim to be able to assess its opportunities and limitations.

The certification requirements can certainly be discussed at times:

Do all the requested topics still fit?

Do the threshold values fit?

Does the balance between the tasks fit?

But despite all these questions, I think it would be a misconception if the European Energy Award were to relieve the participating municipalities of these questions. It's the other way round: it's right that everyone has to ask themselves and push for appropriate political decisions as to what from the eea certification catalogue suits their own municipality or district and how the proposals relate to other important municipal tasks and concerns.

In the work cycle of eea certification, which is organised according to a modern management system in this respect, these questions and these considerations will be faced again and again. In my view, this is also a coherent approach.

However, it is also clear that the eea itself must retain its modernity. I think the European Energy Award Association and its associations at national level are keeping an eye on developments in order to always be able to offer a particularly effective instrument with the eea. I am convinced that your President, Mrs Gudrun Heute-Bluhm, also stands for this. Overall, the climate protection targets have become significantly more stringent, the focus on certain action requirements is constantly changing, as can be seen in the example of heat supply, and digitalisation as an instrument for action but also as a service expectation has taken on a completely different significance than before.

So there is also a lot to do internally for the eea, its criteria, the management system and, in particular, the eea advisory services! This is especially true on the road to greenhouse neutrality.

In particular, I am sure, and I would like to address this to your President, Gudrun, that we will continue to work on the current issues with the supporting organisation of the European Energy Award in a very agile manner and in good coordination with the needs of the participating municipalities. And I look forward to the results.

Ladies and gentlemen, so far I've spoken a few words on the role of municipal acting against climate change and on the European Energy Award as a helpful instrument. I also encouraged the eea-Association – let's say: – to keep up with always new challenges.

At this point let me underline, that with the trinational area of Basel the Association you couldn't have decided for a more fitting place for this event. The region, which is defined by a major Swiss city as well as a German-French-Swiss conurbation but also incorporates very rural parts, may in many senses combine the „best of all.“

In any case, the trinational Basel-region is inspiring to many people – so it is to me – and this inspiration may be indeed useful for our goals of climate protection by questioning:

Which are my neighbour's goals and which are the one we could share?

Which instruments are used on the other side of the border and which ones should be adapted?

Why am I not as successful as my neighbor in a specific field and what can I do about it?

And at best: Which measures can we take on together – using the power of trinational Swiss-French-German acting and funding?

You see, my thoughts reach a bit further than only the European Energy Award...

- but for now I wish you a wonderful evening and a pleasant stay in Lörrach or nearby

- Thank you all for your strong commitment and congratulations to your accomplishments!