

# **Evaluation of Clean Energy Wire (CLEW) and klimafakten.de**

Management Summary

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## Background

In 2013, Stiftung Mercator and the European Climate Foundation initiated the **Clean Energy Wire (CLEW)**. CLEW is an independent, not-for-profit information and media service for international journalists and the interested public that produces journalistic content about the energy transition in Germany.

The project is based on the observation that the success of the energy transition in Germany also depends on its external perception. CLEW intends to be the central contact point for journalists reporting on the energy transition in Germany, aiming to provide expert contacts, thorough analyses of the current state of play of the political debate and significant facts and figures on Germany's energy policies in a balanced and non-partisan manner, thereby supporting quality journalism on this issue.

CLEW was established as an independent operational division of the Smart Energy for Europe Platform (SEFEP) gGmbH. In addition, **klimafakten.de** was integrated into SEFEP's institutional framework. Klimafakten.de aims to inform about the fundamentals of climate sciences, to provide fact-based responses to sceptical questions about climate change and to point to the societal and economic effects of climate change in Germany, thus anchoring scientific facts on climate change in public debates and supporting informed media reporting.

Fifteen months after the joint inception of CLEW and klimafakten.de, Stiftung Mercator has commissioned an evaluation to assess whether the projects have successfully met the demand for a) a well-functioning information service for all topics surrounding the energy transition in Germany and b) an easy-to-understand knowledge base on climate change, and whether there continues to be a need for their services.

## Methodology

The evaluation team made use of the following methods:

- qualitative content and language analysis of selected texts, using the 63 language criteria defined by the Institute of Consumer-Journalism at the East-Bavarian University of Applied Sciences Amberg-Weiden;
- background interviews with stakeholders from media, government, foundations and the energy industry;
- quantitative online survey among 237 European business journalists (23 respondents, response rate: 9,7%);
- analysis of statistical data (e.g. number of website users, participants in events, downloads of reports)
- desk research on the current state and future prospects of journalism.

## Main findings

### Finding number 1:

There is an increasing need for the services provided by CLEW and klimafakten.de. When the projects were approved, media outlets worldwide already witnessed a deteriorating financial basis and, consequently, a drop in editorial capacities to properly research, select and present complex facts.

The state of journalism has worsened in recent years which has negative effects on the coverage of essential, but rather complex topics like climate change and the energy transition. CLEW and klimafakten.de meet the demand for balanced and for well-researched information on these topics.

#### **Finding number 2:**

Many countries are increasingly interested in the progress of the energy transition in Germany. With its services, CLEW successfully supports international journalists in reporting competently and accurately on the energy transition, thereby contributing to a better understanding for this complex topic.

#### **Finding number 3:**

CLEW has developed a comprehensive portfolio of high-quality services (news digest, dossiers and factsheets on different energy policy topics as well as expert and publication lists; journalist trips and workshops) and, after a short period of time, serves key journalistic players worldwide – including many opinion leaders in the international media – with credible information on the energy transition in Germany. CLEW's activities are rated very positively. The number of users of CLEW's services are growing steadily. Within 14 months, more than 70,000 users have studied the 18 dossiers on cleanenergywire.org, worked with the 50 factsheets, used the 180-strong expert database and read over 100 news stories. Nearly 300 briefing subscribers rely on the daily news round-up. Around 180 journalists from over 30 countries have personally taken part in briefings, short workshops and seven major research trips.

#### **Finding number 4**

The scientific analysis of the journalistic content as well as the interviews and surveys conducted in this evaluation show without exception that the quality of the services provided by CLEW is remarkably high. All international journalists interviewed for this evaluation praise CLEW's services as helpful and important to their professional work. Many international journalists call for an expansion of CLEW's activities.

#### **Finding number 5**

CLEW's approach of supporting a differentiated media coverage of the energy transition in Germany via the provision of balanced and well-researched information works effectively. The journalist workshops and the information provided in different types of texts contribute to an improved quality of coverage in international media regarding Germany's energy policy. Due to the research trips and workshops, a growing network of international journalists and multipliers has been established.

#### **Finding number 6**

Due to its confirmed editorial independence, the absence of any partisanship and the high quality of its services, CLEW has rapidly established itself as a trusted source of information. As one journalist from a major international news outlet finds in the evaluation: "In CLEW we trust!" International quality media increasingly quote or provide links to CLEW's articles.

### **Finding number 7**

Due to CLEW's rising international success, articles and information pieces on the energy transition in Germany produced by international journalists with CLEW's support are again being picked up and reported on by German media outlets.

### **Finding number 8**

Klimafakten.de has created an easy-to-understand knowledgebase on climate change for journalists and the interested public and played an important role in taking climate science findings into society. There is no service in the German language market with a comparable offer. Therefore, klimafakten.de has an important information role for a wide audience, which would otherwise be fulfilled inadequately. The fact that one in five users of klimafakten.de is a recurring user, shows that the quality of the site is convincing.

### **Finding number 9**

The success of both CLEW and klimafakten.de can also be credited to the fact that both projects are supported by two independent funders, Stiftung Mercator and the European Climate Foundation. Both projects enjoy full editorial independence and, hence, high credibility among its target audience. The role of the foundations as initiators and funders of these projects is positively perceived both by other foundations as well as the general public.

### **Finding number 10**

Within a short period of time, CLEW and klimafakten.de have managed to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to their target audiences. CLEW has effectively informed international debates about the energy transition and Germany's current shift towards a low-carbon economy. Klimafakten.de has successfully laid the groundwork for fact-based debates on climate change in Germany.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the evaluation and in order to build on the projects' achievements, the evaluator recommends continuing the support for both CLEW and klimafakten.de.