

Interdisciplinary Winter and Summer School on Energy Systems in Austria and the Czech Republic

Final Report

Stefan Schleicher
Jiřina Jílková

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Aim and content of the Winter and Summer School

The idea for this Winter and Summer School has arisen through an intense cooperation of the Czech and Austrian energy experts since 2002. Also positive experience with this project in 2006 and 2007 led to the intention to organize it again.

The Czech-Austrian Energy Expert Group (CZ-AT EEG) was established in 2002 by the Austrian and Czech Governments. The aim of this high level task force is to jointly study the problems of energy systems in both countries. The members, appointed by their governments, are affiliated with Czech and Austrian universities and institutions. One of the major aims of the CZ-AT EEG is the dissemination of results of the joint research projects to assist not only in a better understanding of national problems with the energy systems but also to contribute shaping future energy policies in both countries.

The Bilateral Winter and Summer School for 20 students fulfils this aim by transferring the results of already finished research projects to Czech and Austrian students who are interested in this issue. The participating students have to prepare their bilateral seminar papers and to present them during the Summer School. Best students will continue in their work as bilateral diploma thesis. The cooperation of students with different specializations from different universities provides incentives for their interdisciplinary approach to the topic.

Winter and Summer School is also a perfect way for students to get to know the actual situation in Austria and the Czech Republic. Therefore, Winter School was organized in Graz in February and Summer School in Prague in end of June and beginning of July, 2008.

Participants

The participating students came from different universities: University of Graz and Technical University of Graz, University of Economics in Prague, Czech Technical University in Prague, Masaryk University in Brno and Charles University in Prague.

10 students from each country were elected through a formal selection process. The students had to fill in an application form concerning their energy-related background. All students had studied for at least 2 years and could prove that they had already dealt with some energy related topics at the university or some practical experience. They were nominated by the project partners and selected in accordance to their study success and experience with the seminar topics.

Due to a two-time higher contribution than in last two years it was very hard to enrol 10 Austrian students. We have succeeded in enrolling them only partly. That means in the first part of the school (winter school) we had all 10 students from Austrian universities but the tenth student who active interested in participation was a foreign student from Spain. He was studying in Graz only for one semester, so he was not able to participate in the summer school. This was the reason why we had only 19 students (10 from the Czech Republic and 9 from Austria) in summer school in Prague.

Organization and program of the Winter and Summer School

The project was proposed and carried out by:

Stefan Schleicher - Wegener Center, University of Graz, Austria

Jiřina Jílková - Institute for Economic and Environmental Policy, University of Economics in Prague, Czech Republic

Together with their project partners:

Reinhard Haas - Vienna University of Technology, Austria

Wolfgang Streicher - Graz University of Technology, Austria

and Jaroslav Knápek - Czech Technical University in Prague, Czech Republic.

The activities were organized by the home universities. For the Winter School in Graz Stefan Schleicher and Wolfgang Streicher were the coordinators, Jiřina Jílková and Jaroslav Knápek for the Summer School in Prague. Topics of the courses and excursions were the topics that the CZ-AT energy experts had already been working on in the joint research projects. Additionally to the lectures, plenty of interesting excursions and discussions were carried out.

The time in between the Winter and Summer School was used for writing the bilateral seminar papers where one Austrian and one Czech student analysed the situation in their home country and put it together in one paper. Students also had to prepare their joint presentation for the Summer School in Prague. For every seminar paper one advisor was elected depending on the background of the different experts.

Next to a certificate for the participation in this project, all students were awarded with 6 ECTS-points by the University of Economics in Prague for the Czech students and by the University of Graz for the Austrian students.

All these data, presentations, seminar papers, background literature, etc. can be found on the restricted area of the project website under www.ieep.cz/projekty (both username and password: "V8A").

Lessons learned and next steps

Winter and Summer Schools being held in 2006 and 2007 were important and useful experiences for the whole organization team. So we tried to improve the organization and contents when preparing the whole project this year (2008).

We asked students to fill in questionnaires to get feedback from them. Their answers will be used for planning a new proposal for the similar project in the year 2009.

Concerning the lectures and excursions most of the students appreciated the interdisciplinary character of the whole course (energy-related topics from economics, politics, engineering, energy saving architecture, etc.) and the cohesion and continuation of topics (of lectures). Everyone could obtain a new piece of knowledge outside his/her university background. Students also appreciated an interactive form of some lessons (using electronic information sources, discussions etc.).

All students' answers about organization of the Winter and Summer School and communication with organization team were very positive.

Students also appreciated after school activities such as city walks or going out together with the other participants that were planned by students themselves. Austrian students also found very useful to stay in a hotel very close to the CTU, which allowed them to use free time as much as possible.

All students liked the excursions, especially the excursion to Öko-Park in Hartberg in Austria and the visit of the high-voltage laboratory in the CTU in the Czech Republic.

There were any negative comments about a size of the group and length of the course. They appreciated relatively small audience to establish nice friendship among students.

We noticed some negative comments on a contribution fee (200 EUR) for Austrian students, which was viewed as a very high.

The summer part of the Winter and Summer school was in the first week of summer holiday, so it was difficult for Czech students living in a campus to find out accommodation when the semester was over. It would be better for the next time to organize summer part during the semester.