

# LITOMĚŘICE (CZ): THE SOLAR GARDEN OF BOHEMIA

PUBLISHED BY ANONYMOUS USER ON 17/05/2010

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The town north of Prague was the first Czech municipality, where local funding to support renewable energy stirred genuine interest in people in a change. Litoměřice, a town with 25,000 inhabitants, a centre of fertile lowlands nicknamed 'The Garden of Bohemia', has helped many families with collectors installation by contributing from the town budget. The main support attraction is the town's motto: 'Who gives quickly, gives twice'. It worked even when the state suspended (bureaucratically cumbersome) national subsidies and the number of installations decreased. Just Litoměřice, where collectors were still accumulating in a solid pace, was an exception.



You can recognize the progress mainly in the north of the city, in Pokratice, where you can see most of solar energy 'traps', many of which are visible on rooftops already from afar. The picture that fans of green energy could see only in Germany or Austria until recently inspires others interested in promotion. And not only among citizens, but also among neighbouring mayors, who are considering introducing a municipal funding model in their villages and towns. It assists to significant influx of requests for contributions, when reports of further price increase of fossil energy appear in media. 'It had not happen to us before, we have received an application for and managed to pay subsidies to five applicants by mid-January,' describes the growing interest Mr. Pavel Gryndler, Head of Municipal Environmental Office. It was him, who 'has licked the local support into shape', since 2002. The emergency model was adjusting with increasing amounts of subsidies paid from the municipal budget from year to year. The original contribution was CZK 20,000 (i.e. EUR 800) per project. At the time of the suspended receipt of requests for state subsidies in 2005 the town doubled the contributions, i.e. the current 40,000 CZK for the project. Note that only apartment or house owners, who have installed at least 3 m<sup>2</sup> of collector area and use the ecological heating (not coal), are entitled to contribution in Litoměřice. In order to avoid conflicts with conservationists (as is the centre of the town is a listed area), it is necessary to inform the relevant building authority of the intention to install the system. It is necessary to add the Heritage Institute's opinion, if the house is located in the conservation zone. Even a citizen drawing a subsidy for a solar installation would get into troubles, if he started heating with coal again. Not only he would have to return the subsidy, but he would also have to pay a fine in the same amount. However, this scenario has not happened yet.

## CARVING RICHARD

### RES-STATISTICS

Solar thermal: 1000 m<sup>2</sup>  
Photovoltaic: 550 kWp

- member of Energy Cities and National Network of Healthy Cities
- consultancy at city environmental department, cooperation with ecological institute SEVER
- regional energy policy
- longlasting financial support of solar installations
- energy labeling of school buildings
- project of geothermal energy utilization (50 MW of the thermal energy, 5 MW of the electrical energy)

Does a town have to be rich in order to be able to afford such solar presents for its citizens? The reality was more prosaic. Richard is responsible for all that. But he is not a local VIP, it is the lifeless storage of low radioactive waste at the bottom of the mine of the same name. When the city got the compensation for its 'nuclear pit', which was designed for environmental purposes, it was decided.

'We started to pay citizens extra money for collectors at a time when the amount of the state financial support was not so interesting and the reception of requests was quite irregular', says Paul Gryndler about the start. He himself was inspired by local support in some German cities. Since then, roughly a third of compensation for 'Richard' has been directed to the solar installations, but the town hall intend to continue with the support even after this resource dries out. The solar contributions are a matter of priority, not a question of the town budget. In 2001, Litoměřice was awarded the Czech Solar Prize (from the domestic branch of EUROSOLAR). Partly taking the idea from Litoměřice, further seven Czech municipalities has started to implement the idea of local subsidies (including Plzeň city also awarded in the 1st year of the RES Champions League with the third place in the division of big cities). However, Litoměřice is the only place where the contributions are paid within 14 days after approval of the request. Compared to the State Fund, from which the applicants receive money usually after months, the town impetus operates psychologically more effectively for urban citizens, although the amount of contribution is lower. Town contributions, whose attractiveness is rising just as they come together with government subsidies, come part and parcel with hard rules. A citizen, who installed panels on his house heated by coal, knows quite something hereabout. The situation became clear during the mandatory inspection tour before payment of the subsidy, so this investor did not get a single Crown of the subsidy.

## STOREHOUSE FOR FOLLOWERS



Even one of the town councillors promotes the town's solar policy with collectors on his roof. You can find modules on the roof of deputy mayor Mr Ivan Palán as well. In addition to supporting individuals, however, the Town Hall has supported 11 collectors for an elementary school and a few smaller installations for the town gamekeeper's house, the asylum house and a collecting yard. It has even supported larger systems for an orphanage and newly on the roof of the hospice. The city converts the public to renewable energy as well as by organizing the annual festival of solar technologies at the square.

PS: In the ten years of the town's supporting renewable energy, 170 installations with a total collector area of solar thermal installations of some 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> and 420 kWp of photovoltaic output were created (but PV is not supported by local grants). However, as the first one in the country Litoměřice now plan another ambitious

project: greater use of geothermal energy in the central borehole. *Jiri Dvorak, June 2010*