

What drives you personally and Windkraft Simonsfeld as an energy company?

Windkraft Simonsfeld has been a driving force in energy transition for many years and contributes considerably to the solution of the energy and the climate crisis - both being the most pressing concerns of our time. I find it highly motivating to contribute to this movement.

Can you explain a little bit to our audience what business you are in and what services your company provides?

Windkraft Simonsfeld is one of Austria's largest producers of wind power. We have been developing, building, and operating wind and solar power plants in Austria and Europe for more than 25 years. In Austria, we have 88 wind energy plants, in Bulgaria, we have two, and in Slovakia, we operate a solar power station. With them, we are producing electricity for 160,000 households. With around 3,700 shareholders, we are also one of the largest citizens' holding companies in Austria. Moreover, we handle the technical management of our own power plants and of those with other operators.



CTO Markus Winter, MSc, MAS, Credit Windkraft Simonsfeld

In addition to Austria, Windkraft Simonsfeld is also active in Bulgaria, Rumania and Slovakia. How is business currently there?

We are seizing the opportunities in these markets to actively advance the expansion of renewable energy. In Romania, we are currently developing two wind farm projects, in Bulgaria we are already operating one wind farm and have another wind farm project at approval stage; in Slovakia, we are currently operating a PV power station, while also developing two new wind farms and another solar farm.

As acceptance within the population is always a big issue, how do you see the developments in these countries and in Austria?

In general, the approval of wind energy among Austria's population is very high, as is shown in recent studies. In addition, it is very important to us to involve citizens in our projects, and to have them on board with our project from the very beginning. We always implement our projects in close coordination with the communities and with the citizens - in dialogue and with persuasive efforts. This creates trust and approval. We strive

to implement these standards of our project development everywhere. Still, there are often country- and region-specific challenges, which we are tackling appropriately.

Which Central and Eastern European markets are particularly interesting for your company?

Austria is our core market; we are pursuing numerous projects here for wind and solar energy. We are currently erecting three 6-MW-class turbines in *Dürnkrut* (Lower Austria). Outside of Austria, our largest current projects are in Romania, where we have been active for many years. Other focus regions are Bulgaria, where we are already operating a wind farm off the coast of the Black Sea, and Slovakia, where we are running a PV power plant.

Looking at the market design and the regulatory framework in Austria and CEE countries, where do you see the main differences?

The Austrian Act on the Expansion of Renewable Energies (*EAG*) has created long-term, stable financial framework conditions for the expansion of renewable energies. The Eastern European countries, in which we are active, however, offer no financial incentives in terms of guaranteed electricity prices. This makes the implementation and financing of projects more difficult. But it is clear that the expansion of renewable energies must be accelerated in



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these countries, in order to reach the EU climate goals, and to tackle the energy and climate crises.

Can you tell us an anecdote about a renewable energy project?

More than 20 years ago, we set up our first 2-MW wind turbines at the *Prinzendorf* wind farm site, a *Vestas V80*, and we thought back then that that was the limit of feasibility. Today, a single rotor blade is longer than the rotor diameter of those old plants. The lesson this taught me: Only the sky is the limit ...

What do you want everybody to know about Windkraft Simonsfeld?

At *Windkraft Simonsfeld*, we stand for future-oriented energy production from renewable energies, which creates affordable, reliable, and independent energy supply for all - in all the countries in which we work. As a holding company whose stock is widely held by the citizens, we enable an involvement via shares or bonds. Our corporate culture is based on a clear sustainability strategy, with a focus on our contribution to the protection of our climate and to a livable world across all sectors.



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Can you describe a typical day in your office?

My day usually starts very early: I check my appointments, from 7:00 am until late afternoon, I have in-house and external meetings, jours-fixes, and negotiations scheduled. After taking time to exercise in the evening, I do another round of checking and answering my emails.



How do you find your inner balance despite of the stressful job?

I've always been an avid sportsman; exercise creates an ideal balance with my office day full of meetings and online conferences. Going for a run or a bike ride through one of our wind farms here in the Weinviertel region means I can relax and be inspired at the same time.

Why do you think Windkraft Simonsfeld is so successful? What is your comparative advantage and what are your unique selling points?

Windkraft Simonsfeld has been a pioneer of the energy transition, with long-term experience and high skills when it comes to developing new renewable-energy projects. Our corporate culture and our take on new projects clearly set us apart from other competitors. We have enabled people to hold financial shares in our projects from the very beginning, and we have always implemented them in close coordination with the communities and the people. Reliability and trustworthiness are our top principles. As an employer,

we are among the most attractive in our industry. It's this whole package that also brings about our economic success. We want to implement success across the board.

If we do the interview again in five years, where does Windkraft Simonsfeld stand then?

We have a clear strategy, by 2030, we want to be producing clean electricity for 500,000 households - and thus contribute significantly to an affordable and reliable supply of energy. Over the next five years, we strive to implement and develop numerous new wind and solar energy projects in Austria and abroad. The current energy and climate crisis shows more clearly than ever that we need more speed, more commitment - especially on a political level. Now is the time for Europe to find long-term, visionary solutions for a future-oriented energy supply, and we will contribute with our experience and expertise - and especially with our power to bring about change and to implement new projects.

Thank you very much for the interview and your time!



If you would like to find out more about Windkraft Simonsfeld and its activities please visit <https://www.wksimonsfeld.at/>

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