# P5.2-1 Innovation City – Blue Skies, Green City

Anette Bickmeyer

E.ON/Initiativkreis Ruhr, Germany

In March 2010, Initiativkreis Ruhr launched a project, which is a first in Germany. Starting in October 2010, a town or part of a city in the Ruhr region with a population of around 50,000 is to be transformed into a 'low-energy town'.

InnovationCity Ruhr offers the region and the federal state of North-Rhine Westphalia the opportunity to become a trendsetter in areas such as energy efficiency, distributed generation and mobility. This will add a new character to the region – one that is truly unique worldwide, both in terms of type and dimension.

The InnovationCity Ruhr project will be using the world's most pioneering energy-efficient solutions – for existing buildings rather than on greenfield sites. The idea is to use new technologies to reduce energy demand by more than 50 % until 2020. This will mean refurbishing all existing buildings to make them more energy-efficient and installing state-of-the-art systems in new buildings. Innovative technologies like heat pumps and solar energy systems are to provide low-carbon energy, while transport systems such as e-cars and e-busses will offer clean and environmentally friendly mobility.

The project will also illustrate how an industrial region can respond to demographic change. Energy-efficient redevelopment of city centres is an investment in urbanity as it creates attractive urban areas. This will stop migration away from towns and cities and promote the influx of people.

InnovationCity Ruhr is also one way of overcoming the structural challenges facing Germany's traditional energy heartland with the end of coal mining in 2018. The project must thus be seen as the nucleus for 'rebuilding the west' in a way similar to the continuing reconstruction of eastern Germany, i.e. a long-term economic stimulus programme focussing on energy efficiency, which will secure existing jobs while also creating new, forward-looking employment opportunities.

The initiative will also be an engine for the labour market and regional employment policy decisions. It will boost the local building trade, particularly medium-size companies such as window manufacturers, plumbers, heating system installation companies, electricians, etc. who will receive contracts as part of the 'climate town' project. InnovationCity Ruhr will also encourage innovative 'green market' businesses to settle in the region – a market with a promising future offering much-needed expertise while also introducing new stimuli into vocational training, continuing professional development and research.

By launching this project, the companies belonging to the Initiativkreis Ruhr association want to present the full range of their trend-setting energy-saving solutions to the general public. These include tried-and-tested technologies as well as energy-efficient innovations to reduce carbon emissions in areas such as distributed generation, electro-mobility and integrated communication

technology (also known as 'smart grids'). The energy industry is planning to recoup some of its investments by marketing the technical expertise developed as part of this project around the world.

Over the 10-year period, the project will require around € 2.5 billion of investments. With some 75 % of the investments currently eligible for financial assistance from the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, the federal government or the EU, the project offers a viable business model for residents, small commercial businesses, large companies and local authorities. The remaining 25 % will require additional public funding or will be made available by local companies for marketing reasons, even if they are still not competitive.