

Coordinating Collaboration: Vicky Albert-Seifried on Steering WeGenerate Forward

From strategic oversight to fostering team spirit across nine countries, the WeGenerate Project Coordinator shares her experience, lessons learned, and hopes for what's ahead.

Vicky Albert-Seifried is a Project Manager in the 'Climate-Neutral Cities and Districts' Group of **Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems (ISE)** in Germany. She manages projects and activities in the field of sustainable energy planning, low-carbon energy technologies and smart cities. In WeGenerate, she is the Project Coordinator ensuring both smooth project management through Work Package 1 and rigorous ethical standards through Work Package 10.

Let's move on to the interview and discover more about Vicky's work in WeGenerate.



Vicky Albert-Seifried, Fraunhofer ISE

Can you describe a typical day in your role as the Project Coordinator for Work Package 1 and share what aspects of your work you find most fulfilling?

As the Coordinator, I am involved in many different aspects of the project - from budget management and organising project meetings to representing the project at external events and strategically steering the direction of key project tasks. It's a steep learning curve, and there are new issues to tackle on a daily basis. Sometimes, it can be quite challenging to keep up with the many

different project activities. Nevertheless, one gains a lot of experience (both good and bad) through learning by doing, and hopefully also becomes wiser as the project progresses.

Managing a consortium spanning nine countries must come with its challenges. What are some of the key obstacles you've encountered in coordinating such a diverse team, and how have you overcome them?

Managing a consortium with many partners

from different professional and cultural backgrounds is not easy, especially at the start of the project. I believe the key is to create a collaborative, open, and fun team environment, where each partner has a clear role but also supports one another and is willing to go the extra mile for the benefit of all. To create such a conducive environment, I think it's important that the coordinator is approachable, and it also helps if the project is organised with a flat hierarchy.

Effective communication is crucial for a project like WeGenerate. What tools or strategies have you implemented to ensure smooth and transparent collaboration among all project partners?

Yes, effective communication is essential - and in a complex project like WeGenerate, which involves many partners, it's impossible for the Coordinator to follow every activity and communication thread. I rely on the Work Package and Task Leaders to coordinate with relevant partners to ensure a smooth and transparent implementation of project activities. While I remain open and accessible whenever the Work Package or Task Leaders need my support, I trust their leadership and step in only when necessary. This approach has worked well so far.

Can you share a memorable moment or a particular project milestone where your coordination efforts made a significant difference in the project's progress?

This is a difficult question - all the memorable moments I recall are the result of the hard work of many different partners. If I

had to pick one, I would say that the Consortium Meeting in Cesena stands out as a significant milestone, as it was the first time we met the Fellow Cities in-person. We had to overcome quite a few hurdles to get to that point, and it marked one of the important early milestones in the project. I think we are all fond of the Picasso portraits that we drew for each other.



Looking ahead, what do you see as the key priorities for Work Package 1 and how do you envision your role evolving to support WeGenerate's goal of creating sustainable, people-centric neighbourhoods?

Since the start of the project, Work Package 1 has focused on laying the groundwork for a smooth project implementation. Now that the core processes are in place, the priority in the next phase will be the actual implementation of the project actions - particularly supporting the Demo Cities' Local Circles in their interventions. We will also work closely with other Work Packages to capture learnings, monitor impacts, disseminate results, and facilitate replication. I believe the WeGenerate partners share a common vision of where we want to be by the end of the project, and Work Package 1 will continue collaborating with all other Work Packages to ensure we stay on track to achieve that.