

Montmélian is Still as Sunny as Ever After a Decade...

The advantage of public action is that it allows projects to be implemented over the long term. This is precisely what the town of Montmélian (Ville de Montmélian), aka Montmélian la Solaire, can boast when it comes to solar energy.

Winner of the IEA Solar Heating and Cooling Programme's 2014 Solar Award, this medium-sized town in the heart of France's Alps is as committed as ever to deploying solar technology.

Daniel Mugnier, Chair of the IEA SHC Programme between 2018 and 2021 and one of the two French Executive Committee delegates, met with Béatrice Santais, the town's mayor and recipient of the town's IEA SHC Solar Award, recently to take stock of the town's solar activities since 2014.

Over the past nine years, the town has not just maintained its solar swimming pool, retirement home, which is equipped with several hundred m² of panels, and the 84 m² installation combining domestic hot water preheating and solar heating at the town's Gendarmerie. But it is expanding its solar park. One hundred thirty social housing units in five buildings in the Commune now have solar thermal collectors. And the technical services department notes that all the systems are operating smoothly, although they would prefer having simpler tools to monitor system performance.

One of the main reasons for the town's focus on solar thermal, explains Madame Santais, beyond the national thermal regulations, is the presence of an exemplary Local Urban Planning Scheme (PLU). So exemplary, in fact, that it has inspired the Schéma Directeur Territorial (SCOT), according to the local councilor, to impose a minimum requirement that 50% of the thermal needs of buildings must be covered by local renewable energy. And that means, first and foremost, solar!

Since 2014, the Communauté de Communes Cœur de Savoie (Coeur de Savoie), of which Madame Santais is also currently president, has been very active on the subject of solar energy, carrying out a whole series of developments to facilitate solar projects, notably the establishment of a solar cadastre. As the Coeur de Savoie energy manager points out, several thousand inquiries about solar thermal possibilities are received every year—even more inquiries than received about photovoltaic solar possibilities in the region. Solar thermal DNA is well established in Montmélian!

There is no stopping Montmélian's solar thermal enthusiasm. In the coming years, an ambitious solar thermal production system for a heating network with inter-seasonal storage to supply around a thousand homes and tertiary activities will be built on the edge of town. According to Madame Santais, this project will be carried out in stages and is capitalizing on the recent significant progress in mastering the technology of large-scale installations with storage, both internationally and in France.

Montmélian la Solaire deserves its name more than ever!

Article contributed by Daniel Mugnier, French IEA SHC Executive Committee member.



Montmélian Mayor Béatrice Santais and Daniel Mugnier, French IEA SHC Executive Committee member, meet to catch up on the town's solar thermal activities since winning the IEA SHC Solar Award in 2014.