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CEO of MIWenergía

«The prosumer will be the main actor in the energy market of the future»

The Murcian electricity retailer, MIWenergía, is firmly committed to research and innovation as a tool to face the challenges of the energy sector. The company, founded in 2013, has consolidated annual growth rates above 30% and customer loyalty rates above the electricity sector average. Ricardo Pérez de Zabalza, CEO and founder of MIWenergía, has maintained, as part of the business strategy, a continuous investment in innovation, applied to energy efficiency as an added value to the consumer and the improvement of the service.

What benefits does innovation bring to an electricity retailer like MIWenergía?

The traditional business model of an electricity retailer has been based on offering the best price. In MIWenergía, we believe that continuous investment in innovation allows us to improve the experience with our customers by providing them with new tools that reduce their electricity bill. Our involvement in different energy efficiency projects helps us explore new ways to add value to our current and future customers.

In which innovation projects regarding energy efficiency is the company currently participating?

We are currently involved in four projects of research and innovation within the EU Horizon 2020 programme. For MIWenergía, having been selected in this type of initiatives has been an enormous achievement considering the very high competition and the high standards in the evaluation of the European Commission.

In these projects, a consortium has been built with entities from different European countries, each one of them performing specific tasks. In our case, we are responsible for carrying out the technological demonstrations in Murcia. A good example of the advantages of participating in these R&D programs is the DRIMPAC Project because of its innovative focus and because it allows us to anticipate the future of the energy market.

What is the DRIMPAC Project?

The impulse of renewable energy and the possibility of injecting our generated electricity to the grid, has made possible the surge of the prosumer. A prosumer is person or entity that can have indistinctly the role of a producer and consumer. The growth of renewable energy, due to its intermittency, is a challenge to the technical management of the grid. As the wind nor solar radiation are constant, when there is a decrease in their production, it has to be balanced by switching on other power plants, with the increase in economic and environmental costs. The objective of the DRIMPAC Project is to measure the user's ability to adapt their consumption to the most convenient periods, either when the cost of energy is cheaper or there is solar production, or to reduce it when the price is high: this is called "Demand Response". The project will develop a solution to measure this "energy flexibility" and put it into value in the energy market, facilitating the deployment of clean energy for the planet. On the other hand, the possibility of choosing rates that charge the users the real price of electricity production hour by hour, allows them to consume when the energy is cheaper. The pilot test is being carried out at the residential neighbourhood of Joven Futura and at the office buildings of Magalia Business Center and Parque Científico de Murcia.

What results are expected in the project and what benefits can the prosumer bring to the energy market in the future?

We hope to achieve enough flexibility so the results of this research can be applied to a real model. The main benefit for the small user is the chance to participate in the energy market with the goal of saving money and reducing energy consumption and CO₂ emissions. The consumer will have an important role, moving away from the passive role they have always occupied. Another benefit is the grid operability improves being able to decrease consumption during high demand periods and facilitating the integration of renewable energy sources.

Once the pilot project in Murcia is completed, what would it be the next step?

The implementation of Demand Response for small consumers has been developed in the European Directive 2019/944 whose application at the national level is scheduled for December 31, 2021. Without a doubt, the electricity prosumer will be the main actor in the energy market of the future. Therefore, thanks to DRIMPAC project, MIWenergía will start with an advantage over our competition for all the practical knowledge acquired during the project. Likewise, we can advise our clients, interested in becoming a prosumer, how to obtain greater energy efficiency and savings in their electricity bill.