

Setting the scene: The European perspective. We need to act now!

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Introduction

Uncertain policy times

Uncertain geopolitical times and the need for Europe to gain energy sovereignty.

The twin energy / digital transition

Usual story how this is possible with RES and the energy/digital transitions.

Role of cities on leading the change

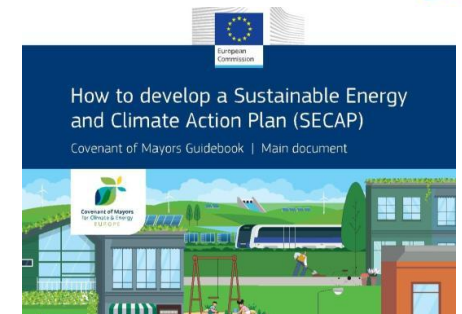
Local energy plans, SECAPs and EU regulation encouraging cities to take the lead.

Mutual dependencies

What does it mean to move beyond silos for cities and DSOs?

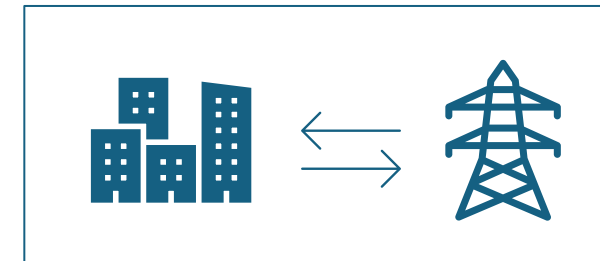
Need to move beyond siloes

Need to understand the energy system as a whole and move beyond silos.



Mutual Dependencies between cities - DSOs

	Cities depend on DSOs	DSOs depend on cities
Urban and grid planning	For any new urban plans, cities need insights into the grid capacity to ensure feasibility. An information which DSOs have access to.	To accurately plan distribution grids and electricity demand, DSOs rely on cities to provide urban growth forecasts. DSOs are also dependent on cities to intervene in the grid and require permits from the municipalities.
Climate commitments	To meet climate goals, cities need DSOs to enable urban electrification.	Investing in grid expansions to enable electrification demands political commitment and certainty given from cities to DSOs.
Flexibility and business case	Cities depend on DSOs for the implementation of flexible tariffs that encourage end users to reduce peak demand.	DSOs rely on cities to provide mapping and forecast of flexible city-owned assets (e.g. public buildings, Public EV Fleets) to use as flexibility providers.
Resilience	DSOs do ensure a reliable and secure electricity supply, with high quality of service and ensure a resilient energy system for connected consumers.	Cities have a close relationship with their citizens and they can engage businesses, and other public institutions more effectively in grid-friendly consumption and energy efficiency efforts, which contributes to the DSOs' goal of mitigating grid congestion.



Challenges in fostering cooperation

- Traditional relation between cities – DSOs
- Issues/missed opportunities arising from ad-hoc cooperation

Overview of key challenges
Multitude of stakeholders
The complexity technical grid issues for external stakeholders and vice-versa
Lack of information sharing and interoperability
Lack of formalised governance structures and continuity mechanisms
Grid concessions



Best practices from our members and advantages – real life experiences

Caruna (Finland)

- **Formalize collaboration early** through **MoUs** to ensure structured cooperation.
- **Integrate city planning into DSO decision-making**—cities provide key insight on future demand and customer locations.
- **Establish clear information-sharing channels** to reduce uncertainty in business case development.



i-DE (Spain)

- **Smart cities programme**
- Develop dedicated programmes to guide collaboration and jointly define and implement actions to foster the local energy transition.
- **Adopt a forward-looking approach**, identifying future needs such as optimal locations for EV charging infrastructure.



Fluvius (Belgium)

- **Networks for tomorrow programme**
- The aim is to **align the DSO investment plans with the municipality's plans and policies.**
- **Co-develop detailed datasets** with municipalities to improve system visibility.
- Leverage shared data for tailored, needs-based investment planning.



ESO (Lithuania)

- **Maintain frequent engagement with the 60 municipal authorities it serves**, meeting 171 times in 2024. **Combine strategic and operational dialogue:**
- Annual high-level strategic meetings
- Ongoing reactive meetings for local grid issues



Opportunities beyond the members' experiences

Opportunities arising from enhanced city-DSO collaboration

For the DSOs	For the cities
<p>Grid stability Better planning and being able to use public infrastructure to balance the grid.</p>	<p>Feasibility of urban plans Collaborating with the DSO lets cities create urban plans that are in line with grid capacity.</p>
<p>Faster permitting By creating structural collaboration, DSOs can benefit from obtaining permits faster from cities and therefore speed up their processes.</p>	<p>Cost and time reductions Collaboration works to reduce grid congestion and allows to combine and align infrastructural works. This results in new municipal projects to be finalised quicker.</p>
<p>Increased capacity Energy efficiency schemes with public infrastructure and community engagement schemes on grid-friendly consumption lighten loads on the existing grid and reduce congestion issues.</p>	<p>Business opportunities Working with DSOs helps to foster local electricity markets and helps local businesses benefit from a well-planned energy system.</p>
<p>Clearer investment planning By proactively receiving insights into cities' urban planning, DSOs can adjust their future investment plans.</p>	<p>Regulatory compliance Cities can comply with their EU obligations such as commitments towards climate neutrality.</p>
<p>Increased resilience of the local grid Collaboration leads to better day-to-day operations and planning reducing the risk of blackouts and increasing sovereignty and self-sufficiency.</p>	



The role of COPPER and the city – grid interface

COPPER

- Developed the method of Local Energy Action Planning (LEAP) for cross-sector strategic energy planning to identify and decide on a set of priority actions and investments for clean, flexible, and digital energy systems

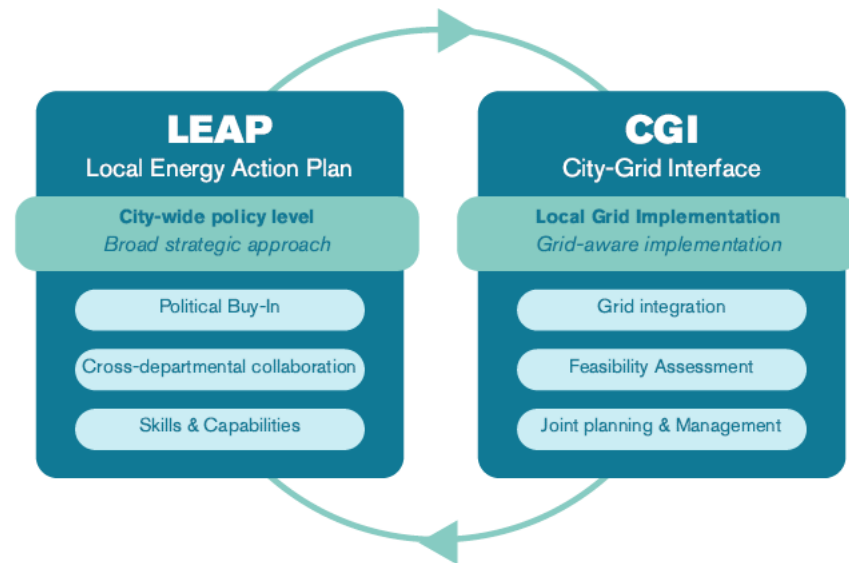
The City – Grid Interface

- Since cities and DSOs are natural partners in shaping the local energy system of the future, the LEAP is complemented by the city-grid interface, which focusses on the relationship between the LEAP and the grid.

The city-grid Interface is a core component of the LEAP and it focuses on the relationship between the LEAP and the grid, providing a structured framework to translate city ambitions into implementable actions that consider the needs and capacity of the grid.

The role of COPPER and the city – grid interface

LEAPs define the local energy transition from a policy perspective, while the CGI translates these policy ambitions into concrete actions that can be implemented within the local grid. CGIs are developed to inform and ensure the adequacy of both LEAPs and DSO's planning structures.



Conclusion & food for thought for policy

- **Regulatory Support:** Adjusting energy and planning regulations to formally enable and incentivise co-planning between DSOs and municipalities, ensuring CGIs are integrated efficiently without creating unnecessary administrative burdens
 - **Capacity Building:** Investing in joint training programs and funding dedicated local energy coordination units to bridge the technical expertise gap between smaller municipalities and DSOs.
 - **Standardisation:** Developing standardised guidance, templates, and data-sharing protocols (like model MOUs or digital tools) to lower the barrier to entry for new city-DSO partnerships
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- Considering the work of COPPER, what does this mean for how we approach the European Commission's Guidance on Grid Connections?
 - For how we consider the Commission's proposed "...single digital portal at national level for all the steps of the permit-granting procedures for renewable energy, storage and grid projects."?