

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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From technology choices to investment: key discussions in Katowice

The Low2HighDH Final Event brought together district heating operators, technology and energy experts, investors, public authorities, researchers and industry representatives to address a central question: what does it actually take to transform existing high-temperature district heating systems?

The event, held on 30 September 2026 in Katowice, Poland, as a side event to Energy Days, marked the conclusion of three years of work under the EU-funded Low2HighDH project. Participants discussed practical solutions for integrating renewable and recovered heat into existing district heating systems and explored how to finance the necessary investments.

The discussions reflected a challenge that has accompanied Low2HighDH throughout the project. District heating decarbonisation is not simply a matter of replacing one heat source with another. Existing networks have been developed over decades around particular temperature levels, generation assets, buildings and demand profiles. Integrating low-grade renewable and waste heat therefore requires changes across the system – from heat generation and network operation to investment planning and financing.

THREE YEARS. TANGIBLE RESULTS.

33

DH SYSTEMS supported

€110.5M

INVESTMENT potential identified

213.5

GWh/YEAR potential energy impact

68,333

tCO₂/YEAR potential emissions savings



PANEL 1: TECHNICAL TRANSFORMATION Finding the right solution for the right system

Keynote: Krzysztof Skowroński, KAPE

Moderated by: Krzysztof Skowroński, KAPE

Panel discussion with:

- Vincenzo Bianco – University of Naples "Parthenope"
- Lars Gullev – DBDH / HOTCOOL, formerly CEO of VEKS
- Tomáš Andrej Murajda – MH Teplárenský holding
- Alice Neffe – Steady Energy
- Bogusław Regulski – Polish District Heating Chamber of Commerce
- Magdalena Ruszniak – Veolia term SA

The first session, opened with a keynote by Krzysztof Skowroński of KAPE, focused on the technical pathways available to district heating systems and the practical challenges associated with their implementation.

The discussion highlighted the need to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach. The availability and suitability of geothermal energy, waste heat, large-scale heat pumps and other renewable heat sources vary significantly from one location to another. Technology selection therefore needs to start with the characteristics of the individual system: available local resources, existing generation assets, network temperatures, heat demand, infrastructure and possibilities for future development.

The discussion also addressed the challenge of integrating low-temperature heat sources into networks historically designed to operate at high temperatures. Reducing network temperatures, improving system efficiency and combining different heat sources can significantly increase the possibilities for using locally available renewable and waste heat, but such changes often require a gradual transformation rather than a single intervention.

Another important issue was the role of existing infrastructure. District heating systems represent major long-term assets, meaning that decarbonisation strategies must consider how existing networks and generation facilities can be adapted rather than simply replaced. The use of waste heat, geothermal resources, heat pumps, storage and other technologies therefore needs to be assessed as part of the wider energy system.

The panel also explored the importance of looking beyond individual technologies towards integrated and flexible district heating systems, capable of combining several heat sources and responding to changing electricity markets, energy demand and local conditions.



PANEL 2: FROM TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE TO FINANCIALLY VIABLE Turning solutions into investment

Keynote (15:30 – 15:45):

- Margot Pinault (Recorded presentation)
Team Leader, Energy Efficiency Policy: Energy Infrastructure and Heating and Cooling, European Commission (DG ENER)

Moderated by: Pablo Baigorria Kobylinski, CREARA Energy Experts

Panel discussion with:

- Sławomir Kamiński – Przedsiębiorstwo Energetyki Ciepłej Sp. z o.o. w Bytomiu
- Giovanni Lazzeri – GNE Finance
- dr. Valdas Lukoševičius – Lithuanian District Heating Association
- Julia Sokółowska – Solas Capital AG

The second part of the event shifted the focus from technology to one of the most significant barriers facing district heating transformation: financing implementation.

While many decarbonisation technologies are already commercially available, identifying a technically feasible solution does not automatically make a project bankable or ready for investment. District heating projects are typically capital-intensive, have long investment horizons and operate within complex regulatory and tariff frameworks. Their financial viability can therefore depend on a combination of investment costs, operating expenditure, energy and electricity prices, access to public support, financing conditions and the ability of operators to recover investments over time.

The session explored the need to translate technical studies into credible business and investment cases that financial institutions can assess. This requires robust assumptions, clear risk allocation and realistic projections of future costs and revenues.

Participants also discussed the importance of combining different sources of capital. Public funding can play an important role in reducing investment barriers, but the scale of the district heating transition means that private capital and commercial financing will also be needed. Developing projects that can attract this financing is therefore a critical step between planning and implementation.

Particular attention was given to the circumstances of district heating companies and municipalities in Central and Eastern Europe, where operators may simultaneously face the need to modernise ageing infrastructure, comply with increasingly demanding efficiency and decarbonisation requirements, maintain affordable heat for consumers and finance substantial new investments.

The discussion highlighted that the technical and financial dimensions cannot be treated separately. Technology choices influence operating costs and investment requirements, while financing conditions can determine which technical pathways are realistically implementable.



FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

Taken together, the two sessions reflected one of the central conclusions emerging from Low2HighDH: district heating transformation is a system-level challenge. It requires more than identifying a renewable heat source. Successful transformation depends on understanding the existing network, assessing locally available resources, selecting appropriate technologies, planning infrastructure changes, developing a viable investment case, securing financing and building cooperation between operators, municipalities, technology providers, investors and other stakeholders.



Find out more:
low2highdh.eu

L2H Low2HighDH



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30 September 2026



Katowice, Poland

part of
ENERGY DAYS

FROM TECHNOLOGY CHOICES TO INVESTMENT: KEY DISCUSSIONS IN KATOWICE



A CENTRAL QUESTION

What does it actually take to transform existing high-temperature district heating systems?



WHO TOOK PART?

District heating operators

Technology and energy experts

Investors

Public authorities

Researchers

Industry representatives



A SHARED CHALLENGE

Integrating low-grade renewable and waste heat into existing district heating systems requires changes across the whole system – from heat generation and network operation to investment planning and financing.



1

TECHNICAL TRANSFORMATION

FINDING THE RIGHT SOLUTION FOR THE RIGHT SYSTEM



- Geothermal energy
- Waste heat
- Large-scale heat pumps
- Other renewable heat sources



- No one-size-fits-all approach – solutions depend on local resources and system characteristics.
- Integration into existing networks often requires gradual transformation.
- Existing infrastructure is a key asset – adaptation rather than replacement.
- Towards integrated and flexible systems that can combine several heat sources.

2

FROM TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE TO FINANCIALLY VIABLE



District heating projects are capital-intensive and have long investment horizons.



A technically feasible solution does not automatically make a project bankable.



Combining public funding, private capital and commercial financing is essential.



Particular challenges in Central and Eastern Europe: modernising ageing infrastructure, meeting higher efficiency requirements and keeping heat affordable.



3

FROM PLANNING TO IMPLEMENTATION

PLANNING
INVESTMENT
IMPLEMENTATION

Low2HighDH helps district heating systems move from an initial ambition to decarbonise towards concrete technical solutions, investment plans and practical next steps towards implementation.

4

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