



# POSITIVE ENERGY DISTRICTS

## FACTSHEET

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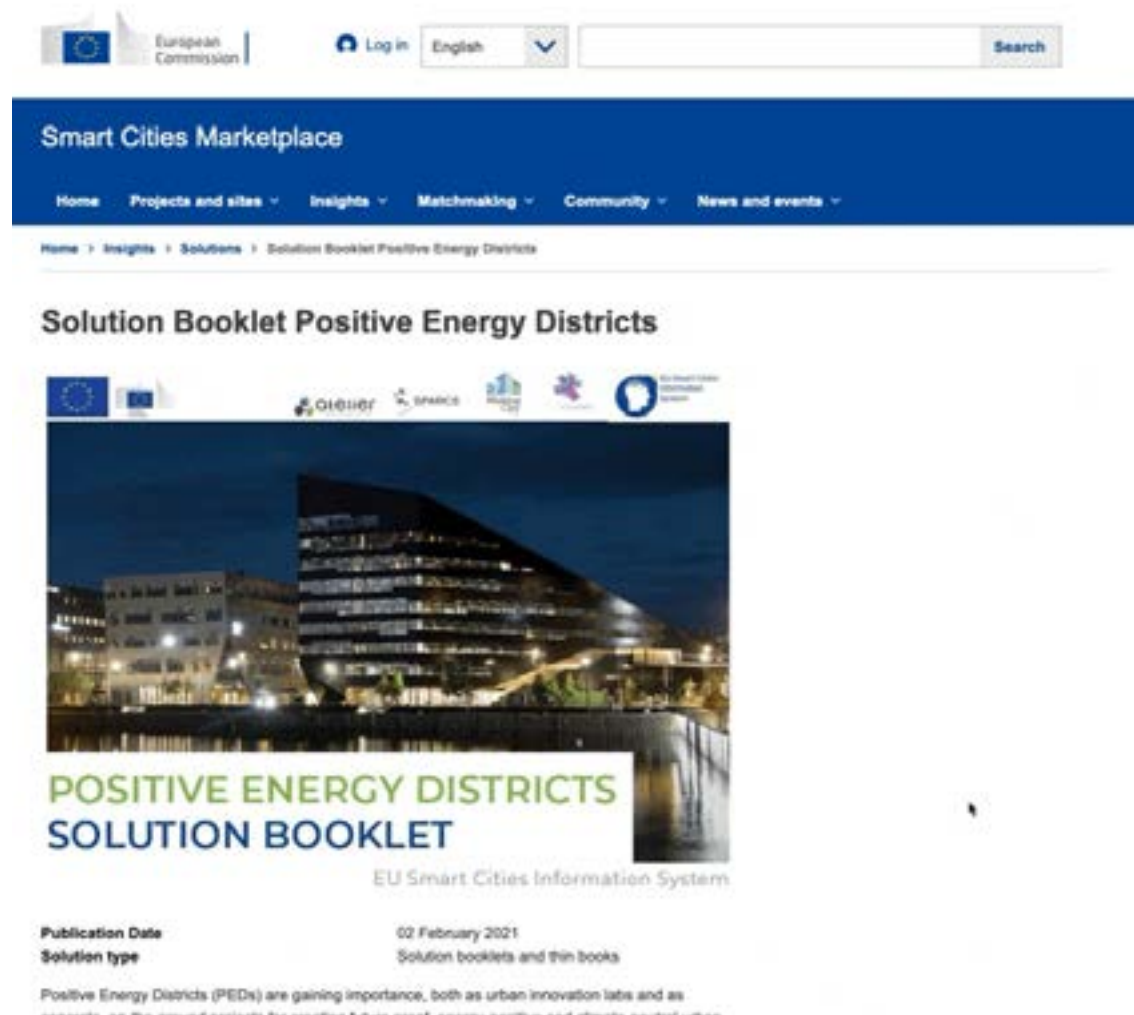
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PEDs often result to be complex urban projects, involving many different actors and stakeholders.

PEDs also necessarily address a multitude of aspects ranging from different energy technologies and their meaningful integration, over citizen engagement and social justice, up to creating composite business models and solving legal questions. The PED solution booklet and its derived fact sheet are intended for the main actors setting up a PED project: local authorities, citizens, investors, technology providers.

In the PED solution booklet, more in-depth information, as well as many more examples and references, can be found [here](#).

Apart from the PED solution booklet itself, which is intended as an umbrella document, SCIS has edited a series of solution booklets that analyse more detailed relevant technologies, development concepts and process setups. These booklets can be consulted [here](#).



The screenshot shows the Smart Cities Marketplace website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the European Commission logo, a 'Log in' button, a language dropdown set to 'English', and a search bar. Below this is a dark blue header with the text 'Smart Cities Marketplace' and a secondary navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'Projects and sites', 'Insights', 'Matchmaking', 'Community', and 'News and events'. A breadcrumb trail indicates the current page: 'Home > Insights > Solutions > Solution Booklet Positive Energy Districts'. The main content area is titled 'Solution Booklet Positive Energy Districts' and features a large image of a modern, illuminated building at night. Below the image is the title 'POSITIVE ENERGY DISTRICTS SOLUTION BOOKLET' and the text 'EU Smart Cities Information System'. A table provides publication details:

Publication Date	02 February 2021
Solution type	Solution booklets and thin books

Below the table, there is a short introductory text: 'Positive Energy Districts (PEDs) are gaining importance, both as urban innovation labs and as...'

## Introduction: definition

In the framework of the EU's SET Plan Action 3.2, JPI Urban Europe and the EERA Joint Programme on Smart Cities have set out to detail an operational definition of PEDs. This initial definition is used as the working basis for the present fact sheet. It states:

“Positive Energy Districts are energy-efficient and energy-flexible urban areas or groups of connected buildings which produce net zero greenhouse gas emissions and actively manage an annual local or regional surplus production of renewable energy.

They require integration of different systems and infrastructures, and interaction between buildings, the users and the regional energy, mobility and ICT systems, while securing the energy supply and a good life for all in line with social, economic and environmental sustainability”.

More: [www.jpi-urbaneurope.eu/ped](http://www.jpi-urbaneurope.eu/ped)



### Solution Booklet E-Bus

This solution booklet presents electric buses' replication potential and barriers from a technical, financial, social and governance perspective. Desk research



### Solution Booklet Electric Vehicles & the Grid

Electric Vehicles (EVs) have been actively promoted on the European market since nearly a decade. The first Tesla appeared on



### Solution Booklet Energy Communities

Energy Communities are a new cooperation concept in the energy market, introduced by the EU Clean Energy Package. They provide



### Solution Booklet From Idea To Implementation

This solution booklet provides a roadmap on how to go from a smart and sustainable city project idea to implementation



### Solution Booklet Heat Pump Driven District Heating Systems

In Europe, heating of buildings is one of the biggest sources of CO2 emissions. After lowering the heating demand of



### Solution Booklet Positive Energy Districts

Positive Energy Districts (PEDs) are gaining importance, both as urban innovation labs and as concrete, on-the-ground projects for creating future



## General information

The big picture: how do PEDs contribute to the overall sustainability and clean energy goals?

The energy/carbon perspective

One could try to make city energy positive and climate neutral by bringing every single building separately to the near-zero energy building (NZEB) standard. Yet, such cities with separate NZEBs would miss many opportunities for technical and financial optimisations, for scale advantages, the use of district energy systems, energy flexibility services and collective energy production and storage. In a similar vein and from the non-technical point of view, a city is neither a mere accumulation of buildings. The goal of integrated urban functioning is of utmost importance, regardless of the chosen perspective.

PEDs are thus the next logical evolutionary steps following NZEBs. Once a city has buildings that start to generate surplus energy part-time or all the time, a change occurs, and these buildings can be integrated differently into the energy system – in the case of plus-energy buildings, the surplus energy has to be shared with others. They can then not only be treated as a local generation but lead the path towards upgrading larger neighbourhoods.

Figure: Energy from district to regional integration and beyond. Scheme adapted from the Whitepaper Transformation Swiss Energy System – Swiss Competence Centre of Energy Research, Future Energy Efficient Buildings & Districts



PEDs may both regard newbuilt, urban retrofit, or a mix of the two. Hereby new buildings may more easily acquire the plus-energy status, and thus be in a position to help to fill the energy balance of existing or retrofitted buildings in the neighbourhood, where the latter often lack the possibilities to fully upgrade to the energy sufficiency.

The scale of integration can be progressively extended but an overall strategy working in the opposite direction is also necessary.

Solving the urban clean energy puzzle is indeed best done in a combined bottom-up and top-down approach. In fact, the regional sustainable and renewable energy potentials (within the urban texture as well as in the surrounding hinterland) define the overall envelope of possibilities to realise a fully decarbonised system.



### Beyond energy: integrated sustainability

A PED is not only about energy. It will preferably be a vibrant urban district where people wish to reside, work and recreate. Mixed functions will hereby not only serve the quality of life but also the energy balancing between buildings of different usage. Mixity can be a catalyser for urban regeneration. A PED can help to fight energy poverty and provide more local green employment. Embedding the energy concept of a PED in a broader framework of integrated sustainability has been intentionally adopted in the PED definition – ultimately, it is about securing the good life for all.



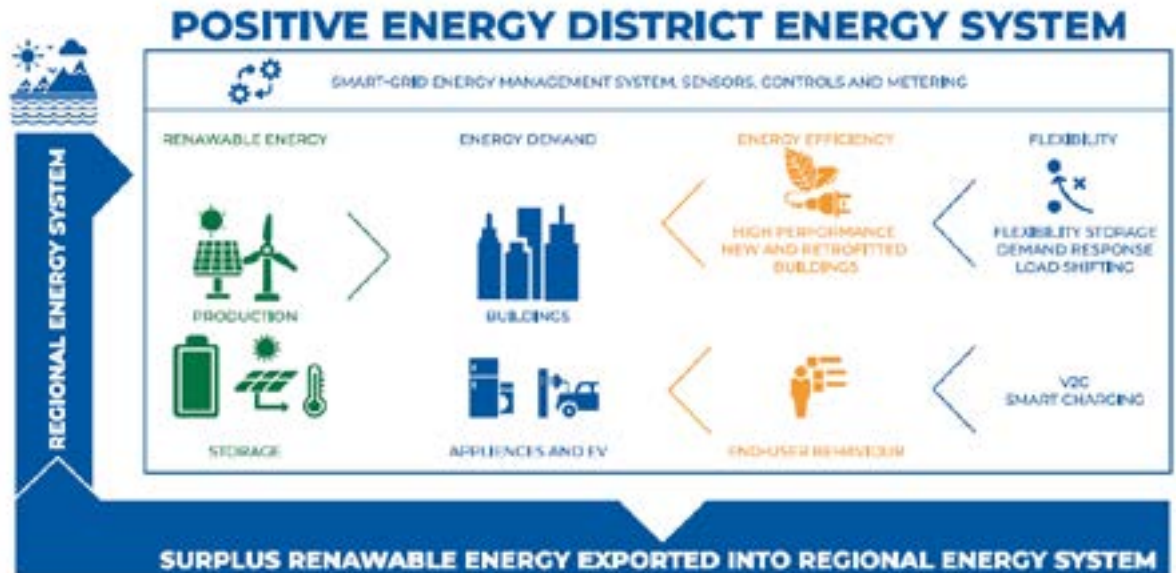


Figure: Simple graph energy system PED in wider context | Adapted from Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

## The energy system of a PED

A PED is characterised by achieving a positive energy balance within a given boundary. Defining the boundaries to the PED energy system is not straightforward. Such boundary can be geographical or virtual. In all cases, the energy system boundary will include a virtual component through connection to a smart grid.

The optimal design of a PED and the corresponding level of surplus energy can only be determined with a wider energy system context and within an upscaling strategy. Boundaries need to be set for the design of the smart grid and interconnections, as well as for evaluation of impact and performance. However, it should be considered that these boundaries are temporary and, to some extent, ambiguous. A strict focus on setting specific boundaries, within which the PED pilot must be energy positive at all costs, could even hinder the upscaling.



## Which steps are needed before implementation? What is the role of local authorities?

PEDs require interaction and integration between buildings, building users, local and regional energy systems, mobility and ICT systems, as well as an integrated approach including technology, spatial, regulatory, financial, legal, social and economic perspectives. PED energy systems should consider the wider context of regional and local energy systems to avoid the creation of tailor-made energy systems that limit opportunities for integration, scale-up and replication.

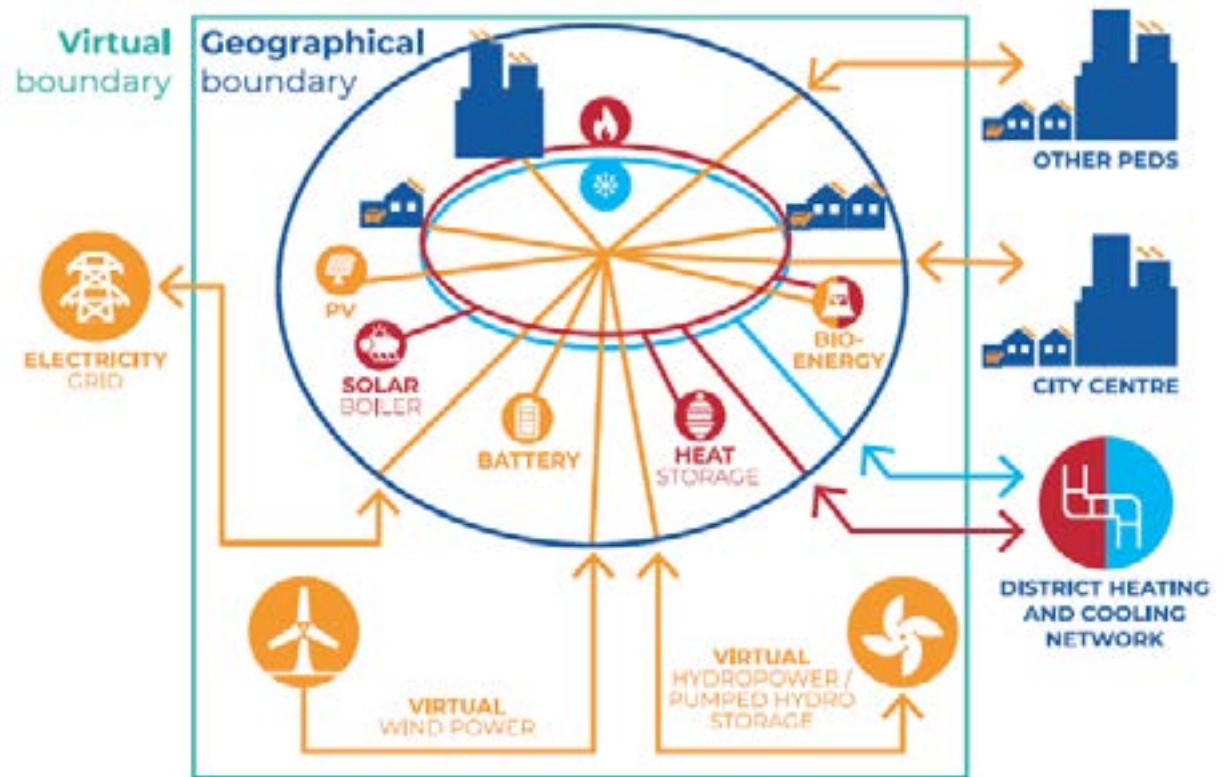
A novel, integrated approach to planning and implementation is needed, which considers not only the full lifecycle of planned investments in the built environment but also the entire community influenced by them.

One challenge is that planning aspects, like renewable energy production, decentralisation and digitalisation of the energy sector, have previously not been focused on urban planning. Until now, energy planning and urban planning have

remained separate, even though the need for their integration has been identified. Hence, integrated spatial, energy and community planning – supporting climate protection and the energy transition with means of spatial planning – has

become more important. In this sense, PEDs can offer an opportunity for a highly efficient and sustainable route to progress beyond the current urban planning traditions.

Figure: PED boundaries. | Adapted from VTT, SPARCS





## Further reading on integrated urban planning and design for PEDs

The Smart City Guidance Package helps to plan and implement smart city and low energy district

projects in an integrated way by describing common situations and giving real-life examples.

There is a [summary guide](#) available and the [full package](#).

## The four pillars of PED energy systems

A high level of energy efficiency and renewable energy production are obvious pillars of the PED design.

Furthermore, energy flexibility aims to allow a higher level of integration of renewables in urban areas.

In those cities with plans to expand e-mobility, the charging infrastructure and charging demand, as well as e-mobility services, can also be integrated into the energy system. As this will be the case in most cities that are considering PEDs, e-mobility is emerging as the fourth pillar of a PED.

These 4 pillars are explained in more detail in the PED solution booklet.

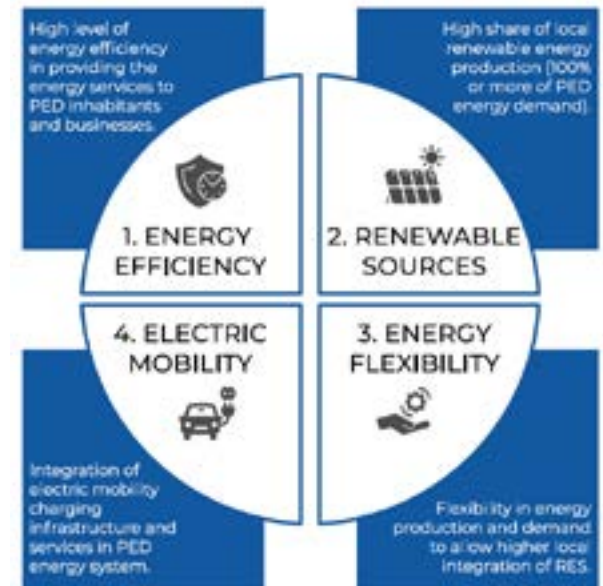


Figure: the 4 PED energy pillars

## Societal & User aspects

The success of implementing PEDs will not only depend on the availability of technical solutions but also on social, political and business commitment. The energy transition is a multi-level phenomenon, involving cultural and societal aspects next to the planning and financing, for example. In order to achieve a truly sustainable and 'smart' energy system which is secure and affordable for all citizens, the social dimension needs to be addressed upfront and throughout.

The engagement of citizens and stakeholders is an important mean to achieve this. Putting the goals and aims of the engagements first, different methods, tools and forms of participation can be suitable and effective: from activating awareness through events to co-creation interventions and citizen science projects.

**Considering a citizen and stakeholder engagement approach in PED projects, the following considerations are especially relevant:**

- ★ Working in a setting of new and existing buildings over large parts of neighbourhoods makes it important to build good connections to citizens and stakeholders, to include their ideas, concerns, and contributions, and make them partners in the transition;
- ★ In order to improve energy-conscious inclusive citizen services, it is required to take measures such as shifting their energy consumption to periods with surplus renewables or using shared e-mobility instead of private cars. This calls for extensive and innovative citizen engagement and co-creation methods, resulting in citizens who understand trust, use and feel ownership of the integrated energy and mobility solutions offered in their district;
- ★ Citizens in a PED may even become energy prosumers. What does that mean for them? What do they need to live and work in a PED? What does it mean to have a form of ownership of your energy consumption and market?
- ★ Can we, beyond the individual PED demonstrators, engage more citizens in the energy transition: increase citizens' knowledge level and motivation, and grow the support and informed appreciation of energy transition measures?



## Regulations and policies

Traditionally, the energy generation and distribution systems as well as the legislation and regulation framework around them, have assumed a centralised, hierarchical system.

This is an obstacle to the energy transition. Decentralisation efforts and the necessary feed-in of renewables cause a paradigm shift. Large installations are treated as power plants, but small installations on or close to buildings need a local distribution grid capable of two-way power flow.

At the EU level, this is handled by directives like the Electricity Directive, and within the EU member states, through grid regulation and general or specific renewable energy feed-in rules and tariffs.

**PEDs go one step further and strongly include local and decentralised energy generation, distribution, and storage within a local part of the grid but at the same time in connection to the wider grid.**

Even if the EU's Clean Energy for all Europeans Package is now coming into an application through 'recast' directives, most of the current energy regulations in Europe are still geared towards the traditional centralised generation and distribution system. Decentralisation is an ongoing topic and many grids are already partially enabled for two-way energy flow.



The flow between buildings and local assets, either directly between neighbours, or through a local community grid operator role, is not part of current regulations yet.

New regulatory principles on this topic have been formulated in the Clean Energy Package. Subsequently, the EU's recast directives in the field of energy are now expected to gradually mainstream such new regulations suitable for PEDs, including price incentive schemes towards a green shift. The EU Member States have one to two years to transpose the new directives into national law. Market mechanisms for PED trading will be part of the electricity market transition.



## Business models and finance

### From a business model to value chain

Setting up a PED is a complex process. It involves many stakeholders, each with their own interests, constraints and (investment) agendas. Managing this requires a high degree of coordination.

This is why the large-scale deployment of PEDs requires the inclusion of sustainable business models that consider the whole process of building, operating and maintaining PEDs.

There is no predefined single business model for the successful development of a PED. Instead, a combination of different business models needs to be found for each stakeholder involved. This applies to each of the pillars of the PED energy system (energy efficiency, renewable energy production, energy system flexibility and electric mobility). For each stakeholder involved (cities, real estate developers, building owners, providers of innovative technologies, energy infrastructure operators, inhabitants...), the PED has to bring a value proposition that meets the stakeholder's needs and wishes.



Therefore, an important step in the development of business models for PEDs is the identification and mapping of stakeholders involved in PEDs, their individual interests and their interactions, representing the PEDs' complex ecosystem.

Apart from energy trading, the trading of flexibility and its management could be a major success factor for PEDs, as it allows the operator to manage capacity and reduce peaks.

**The potential of flexibility, however, depends on the local configuration of the distribution grid and whether the latter presents bottlenecks or not: see a related [SCIS policy paper](#) on the impact of the EU's changing electricity market design on the development of smart and sustainable cities and energy communities.**

Figure: PEB Implementation and Operation through Business and Investment Models Innovation. Adapted from: [+CityxChange D2.4](#) Report on bankability of the demonstrated innovations;

Suitable business models have to be identified for each involved actor. Typical business models that are relevant for the four pillars of PED energy systems are listed below. Most of these business models already exist in practice: the challenge and the innovation for PEDs is to combine several of them.

### FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY:

The energy renovation of buildings can benefit from several business models, adapted to different types of buildings and the needs of their owners:

- ★ Within a one-stop-shop business model;
- ★ Within the Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) model;
- ★ There are many more ways urban (energy) renovation projects can be financed. Local authorities can hereby take a leading role in setting up innovative investment schemes. A summary overview of concrete financing solutions can be found in [SCIS's policy paper on urban energy retrofit](#) and in the renovation hub ['Stunning' overview of business models](#).

### FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY PRODUCTION:

The development of local, renewable energy production within a PED can equally be based on different business models. Some examples apart from the single-owned asset:

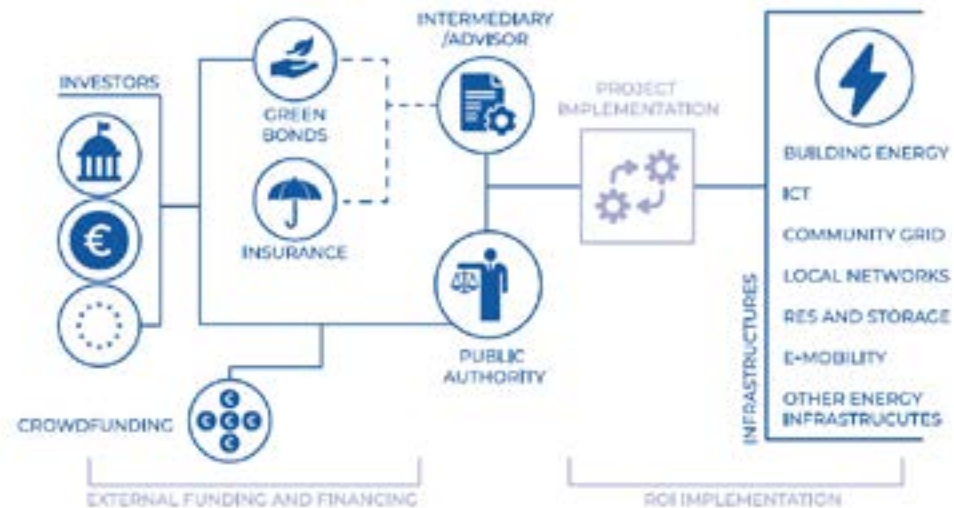
- ★ Within a roof, building integrated PV (BIPV) or land renting model;
- ★ With the leasing of renewable energy equipment;
- ★ An energy cooperative is a non-profit entity for green energy production and consumption which performs the same activities as any other retailer or energy producer company;
- ★ The deployment of a district energy system, which can be combined with local heat and cold production. The majority of business models for district energy involve the public sector to some degree, whether as a local policymaker, planner, regulator or consumer, or more directly through partial or full

ownership of projects.

### FOR ENERGY SYSTEM FLEXIBILITY:

Energy flexibility, consisting in adjusting the energy consumption (and possibly production), to the needs of the energy system, can be combined with other pillars of PED energy systems, in particular energy production and electric mobility. The following business models illustrate the concept of energy flexibility:

- ★ Demand response consists of reducing or increasing the load level of consumers for some time when the price of electricity reaches a high/low enough level;
- ★ Tariff structures also play a role. As far as capacity is going to be charged rather than the quantity of electricity purchased, the viability of offering flexibility may increase (e.g. BE, CZ);
- ★ Also, thermal flexibility services in district heating are bringing new advantages;
- ★ These activities may take place under the



umbrella of Renewable Energy Communities (REC) or Citizen Energy Communities (CEC) as recently defined by the EC.

### FOR ELECTRIC MOBILITY:

Electric mobility can nicely complement the other pillars of the PED energy system:

- ★ Through offering Mobility as a Service (MaaS);
- ★ When electric vehicles are well spread and technology allows it, smart charging (SC) or vehicle-to-grid (V2G) can complement demand response from buildings by adjusting the charging load or even discharging the car battery depending on the energy system needs;
- ★ By rolling out urban freight logistics (UFL).

Further reading on smart city business models (provided through the SCC Lighthouse Projects):

Smarter Together [handbook on Smart City Business Model innovation](#);

SmartEnCity Regeneration Strategy, [New business models, procurement schemes](#)





## Governance

### “A PED is a process, not a product”

PEDs are still novel systems but will always involve multiple building blocks and a large number of stakeholders and contributors which will each have their own ambitions, agendas, interests and constraints. The PED process and projects are therefore complex and require a high degree of coordination.

The stakeholders usually include municipalities, real estate developers, building owners, tenants, energy providers for electricity and heating, research institutes and universities, mobility providers, energy system providers, ICT companies, industry, SMEs, non-profits or NGOs, politicians, and, last but not least, citizens and their organisations.



### PEDs are evolving

Changing the - historically grown - energy infrastructure at the district or urban scale is more disruptive than transforming individual building installations.

Most PEDs will, moreover, involve urban renewal and retrofit to complement the energy system upgrades and to achieve the necessary demand reduction. Given this complex context, it will therefore be impossible to realise a PED overnight. Managing the corresponding urban transformation process requires a well-conceived governance structure.

### PEDs versus local energy communities

PEDs may, in the near future, revert to Local Energy Communities (LECs) for operationalizing their energy systems and markets. The EU regulatory frameworks provide two definitions embodying the same principle, yet with slight differences: Renewable Energy Communities (RECs – under the Renewable Energy Directive) and Citizen Energy Communities (CECs – under the Electricity Directive). See the RESCOOP platform for a discussion [here](#).

RECs and CECs are an outcome of the implementation of the EU Clean Energy for all Europeans Package. Subsequently, the EU's recast directives in the field of energy are now expected to gradually mainstream such [new regulations suitable for PEDs](#).

## Deep dive: PED(-like) projects in practice

JPI Urban Europe has compiled an overview of already built or planned PED-related or PED-like projects which is available [here](#).



## Join the community of the Action Clusters and Initiatives of the Smart Cities Marketplace

The community consists of many action clusters and initiatives with a variety of activities to help to shape the market for smart cities in Europe. These are assemblies of partners, committing to work on specific issues related to smart cities, by sharing the knowledge and expertise with their peers, providing added value with their national and local experience and identifying gaps that need to be filled at the European level. The work of each Action Cluster is collected under thematic initiatives.

An Initiative pools the work of the various partners around a particular objective while promoting learning beyond the project and geographic borders, and opening the results to the world at large. Links with EU-funded projects allow results to be consumed by thousands of active people on the Marketplace. Each Initiative is led by an Action Cluster.

### Action Clusters of the Smart Cities Marketplace:

#### Sustainable Urban Mobility

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