



EUROPEAN Be.SHARE PROJECT

Kick-off Event – April 22, 2026 - Report

On 22 April 2026, Brussels Environment officially launched [Be.SHARE](#), a European pilot project for a carbon-neutral heating and cooling network, based in the Brussels Northern District. More than just a technical project, Be.SHARE is an urban laboratory for the transition, bringing together public authorities, private sector players, academia and civil society. Whether by coincidence or not, 22 April was also *International Earth Day*.



THE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL	
Budget	6,25 M€ - of which 5 M€ financed by the European Union (European Urban Initiative, third call) and the last 20% are brought by each partner
Timeline	October 2024 → March 2029
Territory	Northern District, Brussels
Governance	Quadruple helix: public, private, academic and civil society
Partners	Brussels Environment, Sibelga, KARNO, VIVAQUA, non-profit organization Convivence, VUB
Replication	Manresa (ES) - Leeuwarden (NL) - Jablonec nad Nisou (CZ)
Stakeholders	Public owners (of territory) : City of Brussels, Brussels Mobility Owners of buildings : Foyer Laekenois, Befimmo, Whitewood
Target audiences (connected endusers)	197 social housings (Foyer Laekenois) + Zin buildings (The Standard Hotel, Vlaamse Overheid, Co-living), Pole Star and North Light (Offices European Agencies)

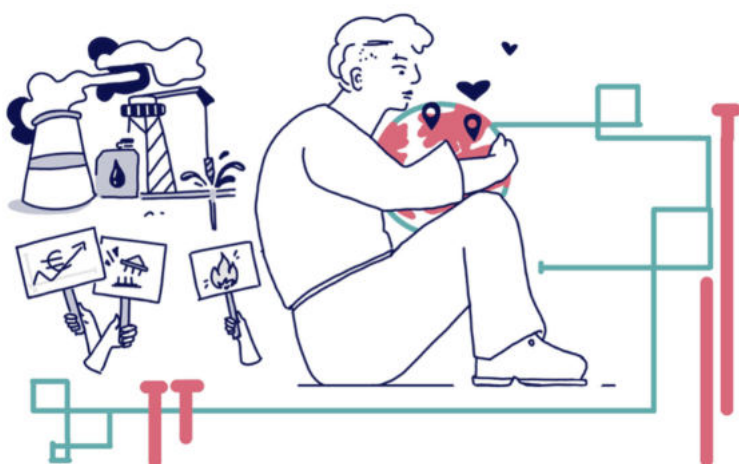
Be.SHARE: A Brussels- and Europe-wide ambition

Introduced by **Barbara DEWULF** (Deputy Director-General, Brussels Environment) and chaired by **Antoine CRAHAY** (one of the project's initiators in his capacity as Sustainable Neighbourhoods Facilitator/Citytools), the morning began with a series of speeches by political representatives from the Region and the City. **Secretary of State Audrey HENRY, responsible for Spatial Planning, Urban Development, Public Sanitation and Energy**, gave the 'official kick-off' and outlined the challenge: controlling energy prices through local sources, moving away from fossil fuel dependencies, and strengthening the social and economic resilience of the region. **Philippe CLOSE, Mayor of the City of Brussels** – within whose territory the heating network will be established – points out that Be.SHARE addresses the three pillars of sustainability – social, economic and environmental – and is aimed in particular at the 'climate-forgotten', such as the residents of the Foyer Laekenois.

At European level, **Kadri UUSTAL (European Commission – DG Regional and Urban Policy, Head of Unit for Cities, Communities and People)** fully aligns Be.SHARE with the European Union's Agenda for Cities: 'This project ticks all the boxes – inclusion, safety, climate and energy, international cooperation, and accessible and sustainable housing. Furthermore, cities are not merely beneficiaries: they are also strategic partners in the design and implementation of European policies.' **Claire ROUMET (Energy Cities)** places the issue within the context of repeated energy crises and calls for a shift: making local energy the backbone of our regions; and also viewing local and regional energy infrastructure as an integral part of the European energy system.

These speakers are followed by **two sessions of presentations and panel discussions**: one, of a strategic nature, featuring representatives from Brussels-based partners; the other bringing together the operational managers from those same partners (see the morning's slides for further details).

The morning session concludes with Ans PERSOONS, Secretary of State for the Environment, Climate, Urban Regeneration, Heritage and the Image of Brussels: in the face of energy challenges, Brussels is establishing itself as an 'urban laboratory at the heart of Europe', where diversity and complexity become assets for the transition. Be.SHARE is a project based on sharing; sharing energy at neighbourhood level, but also sharing experience.



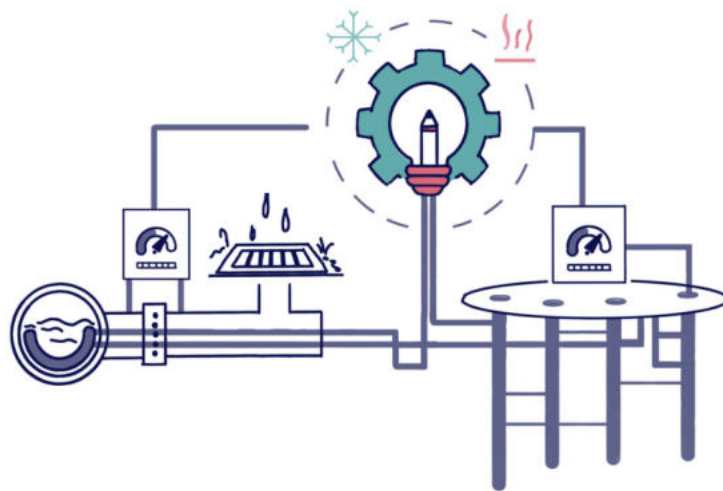
"Homegrown energy – energy sourced locally, right here in our neighbourhoods – is the only certainty in today's uncertain times."

– Claire ROUMET, Energy Cities

In practical terms, how does Be.SHARE work?

➤ A district heating and cooling network

The project presentation is led by **Vincent VANDERNOOT** (Brussels Environment, Be.SHARE Project Manager). The system is based on a **fifth-generation, low-temperature heating and cooling network** (Sibelga – KARNO). In practical terms, a hot water loop and a cold water loop run beneath the road network and connect the buildings to one another. Each building is equipped with a sub-station (water-to-water heat pump) that adjusts the network temperature to its requirements. Additional consumption — offices during the day, residential properties around the clock — is balanced out across the network, and surpluses are directly exchanged.



➤ Two local and renewable energy sources

Geothermal energy (KARNO) — Around a hundred boreholes buried 200 metres deep beneath Maximilian Park, where the temperature remains constant at around 15°C all year round. Each borehole captures up to 13,200 W. Drilling is scheduled to take place between June and October 2026, whilst respecting the trees and the layout of the future park.

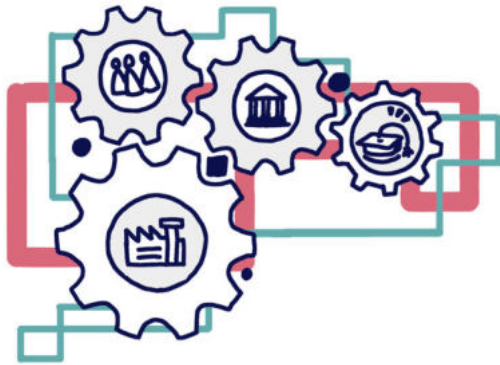
Riothermy (VIVAQUA) — HDPE (High-Density Polyethylene) pipes containing a conductive liquid (VIVAQUA patent, low-tech and robust technology) are placed at the bottom of the sewer collectors on Chaussée d'Anvers. When one considers that the Brussels region has 18,000 km of sewers, one realises the considerable potential for developing and replicating this 'free' resource.



The key concepts that make the project unique

An urban laboratory. The North District, scarred by the failures of the Manhattan Project in the 1970s, is becoming a 'living lab' for the city of tomorrow. Whilst 5G networks exist elsewhere, the innovation lies in the scale: the neighbourhood that connects different buildings and functions, and the mix of renewable energy sources (geothermal and river-based thermal energy/ riothermy).

A network run by and for the people. The non-profit organisation Convivence supports the 197 homes at Foyer Laekenois: the team of two workers – one wearing a blue cap (technical support) and the other a red cap (resident support) – is gradually reaching out to residents through drop-in sessions in the communal areas, one-to-one support, and even the formation of a committed residents' group. As Barbara DEWULF pointed out in her introduction, 'there will be no transition without the involvement of everyone, including those in the most precarious situations'.



'Cross-functional' governance. 'All the technology is already in place – the challenge lies in governance.' (KARNO) With its six partners and five key stakeholders (the City of Brussels, Brussels Mobility, Foyer Laekenois, Befimmo and Whitewood), as well as numerous users, the project goes well beyond traditional silos.

Turning the least noble into a virtue. Sewers, long relegated to the urban background, are becoming a source of renewable, shared energy.

Monitoring and evaluation. Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), the academic partner responsible for monitoring and evaluating the project, defines the indicators, measures progress and keeps the partners regularly informed.

A European ripple effect. Brussels is becoming a 'front-runner', inspiring three cities that are replicating or adopting the model: Manresa (Spain), Leeuwarden (Netherlands) and Jablonec nad Nisou (Czech Republic).

"More than just an energy infrastructure, it is a network of public, private, academic and citizen partners."

— Barbara DEWULF, Brussels Environment

How does that work in practice, on-site ?



In the afternoon, participants explored the site where the future network will be built, in the Northern District of Brussels, via four stops: **the network's route** along the roads and how it will operate (Sibelga), the **geothermal field** in Maximilian Park (KARNO), the **support provided** for the 197 homes at Foyer Laekenois (by the non-profit organization Convivence), and the **sewers fitted with thermal recovery systems** (riothermy - VIVAQUA).



VIVAQUA



Convivence Samenleven



Gemeente Leeuwarden