



Mouscron, a city going solar

Mouscron, Belgique

IN A NUTSHELL

The COOPEM - Cooperative Energy Mouscron a first of its kind of cooperative, is reminding us that the city is a pioneer in energy efficiency solutions and the promotion of renewable energy.

Context

In city of Mouscron, located in northern Wallonie, the local authority has established a sustainable energy action plan to realise the city's climate ambitions. Focusing on the development of renewable energy, sustainable buildings and citizen engagement, the city has managed to bring together private and public stakeholders, along with a handful of residents and partners, into a cooperative, the Cooperative Energy of Mouscron (COOPEM) founded in May 2017. This joint ownership model, a first of its kind in Belgium, emerged within the city's commitment to the Covenant of Mayors initiative, signed in 2012, with the objective of reducing CO2 emissions by 21% by 2020. Since then, the city has updated its target in accordance with the European commission's objective to reduce GHGs by 40% by 2030 (based on 2006 emissions).

With the help of a grant through the POLLEC 2 (Politique locale Énergie Climat) policy, the city set up the cooperative in order to finance renewable energy production projects in an alternative way.

This hybrid cooperative model made the city council a promoter but also shareholder of the project from the very beginning. The local authority owns 15% of the cooperative's shares. Fourteen citizens were also part of the launch of the cooperative, together with two trusted partners in the field, including Energiris, a citizens-led investment cooperative very active in the Brussels Capital region and ARA-LIA, a company with a strong track record of renewable electricity production projects.

Promoting solar power for individuals

The COOPEM allows individuals to reduce costs by organising themselves to purchase materials together and profit from a specialised company's expertise in installation. Moreover, COOPEM used a 'qualiwatt bonus,' an annual allowance paid for five years by the distribution system operator to individuals who installed the panels. This was a great tool for encouraging installations. The qualiwatt support mechanism was pre-financed, and applied to small solar photovoltaic installations (power <= 10 kVA).



MOUSCRON



Population:

56,435

Area

40.08 km²

Signatory to the Covenant of Mayors since:

2012

CO₂ emission reduction target:

21% by 2020

Since the government decision to put to an end this mechanism in 2018, private investment has reduced. Nonetheless, since June 2018, about 15 installations have been successfully conducted within the COOPEM mechanism. This represents about 52,000 'watt-peak', the amount of energy that the panels could generate under optimal local weather and sunshine conditions.

In total, under the impulse of the cooperative, around 100 installations have already been conducted in the homes of residents since the beginning of the project. This represents 1,145 photovoltaic solar panels installed, estimated to produce 292 MWh.

Other cities in the Wallonia region are starting to copy the COOPEM model. In the municipality of Aywaille, the local transition network is using the same approach for a network of small renewable production units generating photovoltaic and biomass energy.

COOPEM experimenting local energy communities

The city of Mouscron is also interested in consumer issues and solutions in terms of energy synergies. The COOPEM works in the 'Local eco-responsible energy communities' project (COLÉCO), developed on an inter-municipal scale throughout 8 communes. There, Mouscron has taken up an innovative initiative: the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Saint-Exupéry School. This makes provides electrical energy to the school during the day as a priority, and, from 4 p.m. onwards, provides it to neighbouring homes. In this system, energy is produced and consumed locally, using the city network to connect between 30 and 100 homes.

This project was made possible by the amendment of the European legislative framework in December 2018, which now allows the creation of 'local energy communities'. These communities bring together nearby consumers to share their renewable energy production facilities.

Collective self-consumption of electricity initially helps reduce the overall network pressure, and thus the costs. These communities also make it possible to better manage consumption: renewable energy, by definition intermittent, requires monitoring in consumption.

COOPEM part of a cross-border project, TransEnergy Interreg project

With Virage Energie from northern France, COOPEM is part of an Interreg micro-project called TransEnergy. This microproject consists in developing three cross-border cycle and pedestrian routes on the French-Belgian border zone.

The objective is to build cross-border tours to see landscapes, infrastructure and initiatives showing that an energy transition is underway in these territories and to sensitise citizens to the challenges of the energy transition and the fight against climate change. The cities of Mouscron and Estaimpuis are working with Roubaix-Tourcoing-Wattrelos-Halluin in France to promote their actions in the energy field.



Around **100** photovoltaic installations in total

In total **1,145** photovoltaic solar panels have been installed, estimated to produce **292** MWh

15 since June 2018, representing approximately **52,000** Watt-peak for homeowner's projects



FINANCING THE PROJECT

- + **COOPEM:** Started in May 2017
- + **Financing source(s):**
The city was granted a sum of €8,000 from the regional government in line with the Political Local Energie Climate (POLLEC2) policy
- + **Total amount:**
The city contributed €3,000 out of the initial capital of €20,000 put together for the establishment of the cooperative
15% of shares owned by the local authority
Majority of shares, 55%, owned by citizens
- + **Return to investment:**
Dividends of up to 6% as of the third year

USEFUL LINKS

- ▶ <https://www.mouscron.be>
- ▶ www.coopem.be



CONTACT

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