



EU-CEE Geothermal Business Webinar (April 20, 2026) Summary Outcome Report

Framing:

The April 20, 2026 webinar convened EU policymakers and industry leaders to shape the upcoming EU Geothermal Action Plan. Despite the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region's vast geothermal potential—particularly the Pannonian Basin and existing district heating networks—development is severely hindered by slow permitting, unfair market competition, and high early-stage financial risks.

Speaker Summaries:

- **MEP Jan Farský:** Championed geothermal as a non-weaponizable, reliable baseload energy source crucial for Europe's strategic autonomy and localized economic resilience. Sees the need for a paradigm shift in CEE recognizing subsurface heat as a domestic, weather independent asset providing resilience from external geopolitical shocks.
- **Sanjeev Kumar (EGEC) & Igor Kocsis (GA Drilling):** Emphasized transitioning to massive "utility-scale" operations to normalize the technology and build scalability—following the path of wind and solar—as the only way Europe can compete globally, especially with the well-funded U.S. market moving decisively in this direction. They called for a standalone EU target of 250 GW, an industrial alliance, and drastically faster permitting processes.
- **Gábor Molnár (Arctic Green) & Milan Jankura (PW Energy):** Highlighted systemic financial, pricing and market barriers to geothermal: (i) riskiest first drilling phase cannot secure bank loans and must rely on equity or grants; (ii) current pricing regulations are tailored for the low-CAPEX/high-OPEX structure of fossil fuels, effectively penalizing geothermal's high-CAPEX/low-OPEX structure; (iii) heat market rules favor incumbent gas and biomass, effectively blocking geothermal developers from accessing existing central heating networks. They urged for fair access to district heating grids and long-term, predictable pricing contracts to satisfy investors.
- **Karen Bazex (World Bank):** Highlighted the Bulgarian Geothermal Online Tool, which allows developers to calculate the levelized cost of heat (LCOH) against gas and coal, providing the transparency needed for state and private investment decisions. Recommended aligning financial instruments with specific project phases, suggesting consolidated funds for early-stage exploration grants, risk-sharing guarantees, and CAPEX loans.

Closing Remarks & Strategic Vision (MEP Martin Hojsík): MEP Hojsík framed geothermal as a hard-security imperative rather than just an environmental luxury for Europe. He believes

landlocked CEE countries are in a unique position given favorable geological conditions of the Pannonian Basin and existing district heating infrastructure that position to not only rapidly adopt geothermal energy but become leaders in the field. He strongly criticized the historical policy preference for fossil fuels, citing the Košice project where EU funds were used to transition a plant to imported gas rather than utilizing proven local geothermal wells. He demanded an immediate end to fossil fuel feed-in tariffs to ensure European ownership and leadership in geothermal technology.

Main Takeaways & Recommendations

- **For the CEE Region:** Connect geothermal sources to existing district heating systems, update price regulation, utilize technical assistance to map resources and prove viability, and develop standardized national roadmaps.
- **For the EU:** Publish a standalone Geothermal Action Plan with a 250 GW target, legislate mandatory third-party grid access to prevent gas lobbies from blocking geothermal entry, and digitalize permitting to reduce 6-to-10-year wait times.
- **For Financial Institutions:** Establish EU-backed "first-well" risk mitigation schemes, provide direct CAPEX support, and update market rules to enable long-term fixed-price contracting.