

## Tlačová správa

Košice 18. 6. 2026

### **European energy sector is looking for solutions for the smart grids of the future: Cross-border cooperation and innovation is the key**

Košice hosted the SMART GRID PCI Summit 2026, a major international event. Organised by Východoslovenská distribučná and Západoslovenská distribučná in cooperation with European partners, the event welcomed representatives of the European Commission, the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), system operators, project partners and experts from several EU member states, who exchanged practical experience gained through implementation of the European Projects of Common Interest (PCIs) in smart grids' area.

Europe's energy sector is currently undergoing its most significant transformation in decades - a transformation that also brings a major opportunity to build a cleaner, more resilient and more affordable energy system. This change is no longer merely a concept outlined in strategic documents; it is taking shape every day across electricity distribution and transmission networks. We are witnessing the growing integration of renewable energy sources, heat pumps and electric vehicles, as well as a rising number of prosumers who not only consume electricity, but also generate and share it. If supported by timely investments, smart technologies and cross-border cooperation, these developments can help strengthen security of supply, make better use of existing infrastructure and keep the transition affordable for households and businesses.

As this transformation cannot be successfully managed in isolation within the borders of a single country, the PCI Summit created an important platform for cooperation. Participants shared their experience from several smart grid PCI projects implemented across Europe, including the Danube InGrid, GreenSwitch, SELENA and CARMEN initiatives which contribute to the modernisation of energy networks and the strengthening of cross-border cooperation. Discussions focused on the crucial role of PCI projects, which not only enhance energy security and facilitate the integration of new generators and consumers, but also make a significant contribution to overall economic and regional growth. Slovakia is among the countries actively involved in the development of smart distribution and transmission networks and implementation of Projects of Common Interest. Investments in network upgrade are essential to meet growing electricity demand, integrate renewable energy sources and support further development of e-mobility. Given the need to ensure affordable energy for the long term, the European Union's support instruments are of particular importance.

**The first panel** of the event focused on how ambitious European objectives can be translated into concrete investment plans and on the preparation of a pipeline of future smart grids projects. Panellists discussed the specific priorities, challenges and expectations associated with the status of Projects of Common Interest (PCIs) within the

framework of the Trans-European Networks for Energy (TEN-E). Particular emphasis was placed on how these smart grids projects can support the European Union's key strategic priorities in energy, namely large-scale electrification, increased flexibility and necessary digitalisation of the energy sector.

*"The Summit is a key platform to ensure active involvement of promoters and other market participants and strong cross-border coordination aimed at the full-scale completion of the smart grids PCIs. Through the Connecting Europe Facility, we support the smart grids PCIs that deliver on the EU's strategic energy priorities, such as electrification and digitisation. Today's debate shows firm commitment from the promoters to offer all the smart grids' benefits to their customers despite challenges in place,"* said **Ona Kostinaitė-Grinkevičienė of CINEA**.

**The second session** focused on how smart grid technologies and innovative solutions are becoming essential for efficient grid deployment, helping to address capacity challenges linked to RES integration, smart sector integration, electrification and cross-border cooperation. Speakers presented practical initiatives and concrete PCI experiences that can help unlock the potential of these solutions and accelerate their deployment, including their role in network planning, TSO–DSO cooperation, flexibility and the optimisation of existing infrastructure.

Ensuring reliable electricity supplies today requires preparedness for entirely new categories of risk. **The third panel** therefore focused in detail on crucially important issue of infrastructure resilience. As our dependence on electricity is significantly greater than in the past, panellists emphasised the need to design and develop networks with maximum consideration for flexibility and security. Participants discussed practical solutions and shared best practices drawn from real PCI projects, with particular attention given to innovative measures that help energy systems withstand the impacts of climate change, extreme weather events and increasingly sophisticated cyber threats.

The discussion clearly demonstrated that addressing these crisis situations and ensuring energy security for millions of households and businesses requires a coordinated approach. Close cooperation between transmission and distribution system operators, as well as institutions involved in the Trans-European Networks for Energy (TEN-E), is essential. Neighbouring countries must work together. System resilience does not end at national borders; it is built on mutual trust, data sharing and interconnection across the European Union.

#### **A call for responsibility and long-term planning**

A common theme emerged across all panel discussions: the future of Europe's energy sector will depend on the ability to accelerate the planning and implementation of investments in smart grids, make more efficient use of existing infrastructure and further strengthen cooperation among member states, regulators, system operators and technology partners.

In his closing remarks, **Radoslav Haluška, Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer of VSD and ZSD**, highlighted importance of a long-term vision and a balanced approach to the three key objectives of network development: affordability, reliability and sustainability.

*“Energy is a long-term endeavour. The investments ahead of us will be substantial, which is why we must approach network development with prudence and a long-term vision. In our investment decisions and network development activities, we focus on creating greater value for customers, and through our actions and the use of data, we seek to encourage them to make efficient use of the distribution system. This is the key condition for long-term sustainability. European energy projects act as a connector – they make us less vulnerable and more self-sufficient as a whole. None of us can manage this transformation alone. It is our shared responsibility to build infrastructure that is secure, modern, resilient and fit for the future.”*

SMART GRID PCI Summit 2026 confirmed that smart grids are among the fundamental prerequisites for the successful electrification of Europe. At the same time, it demonstrated that effective cooperation between European institutions, system operators and project partners is an essential condition for successful implementation of future PCI projects. For distribution system operators, which are facing significant pressure to integrate renewable energy sources, support e-mobility and increase flexibility, EU funding, such as the Connecting Europe Facility, also plays an important role by helping them adapt their networks more quickly to new requirements.