Mastering EV Charging Tariffs

Everything eMSPs, CPOs and site hosts need to know about charging tariffs

optimile

Why
tariffs matter

A charging station without a **clear tariff** is like a store without price tags. Drivers don't know what to expect, and that leads to frustration, complaints, and legal exposure. **Transparent pricing is a legal requirement**.

At its core, a tariff is what the CPO and site host get paid to cover energy costs, infrastructure, and operational overhead. Beyond that, tariffs can also **shape charging behavior**: as a CPO or host, do you want to be compensated when a spot stays occupied too long? Do you want a different rate for overnight sessions? Then you need to understand how tariffs work, and what they can and can't do.

For eMSPs, it's just as important: **an eMSP translates CPO tariffs for end users**. The clearer and **more transparent** that story, the more trust they build.

01 The Optimile approach

Optimile has been working hard to make **EV charging tariffs fully transparent** for both the host who sets them and the driver who receives them. Today, drivers can already see exactly what a session will cost in the app, including time window-based pricing. The next step, giving CPOs and site hosts the ability to set **flexible tariffs** directly in the platform, is coming soon.

After reading this guide, as a CPO or eMSP, you will know exactly what's possible, and you will be able to make the right choices from the start.

When deciding which tariff features to build, now and in the future, we balance several factors: useful features for CPOs and hosts, clear and fair pricing for MSPs and drivers, technical limitations (hardware, communication protocols, market adoption), market trends (like time-window based rotation tariffs), and industry standards (OCPI compliance).

02 The building blocks
of a tariff

In the world of EV charging, tariffs are generally built from up to **three price components**. The Optimile platform works within that same structure.

START PRICE

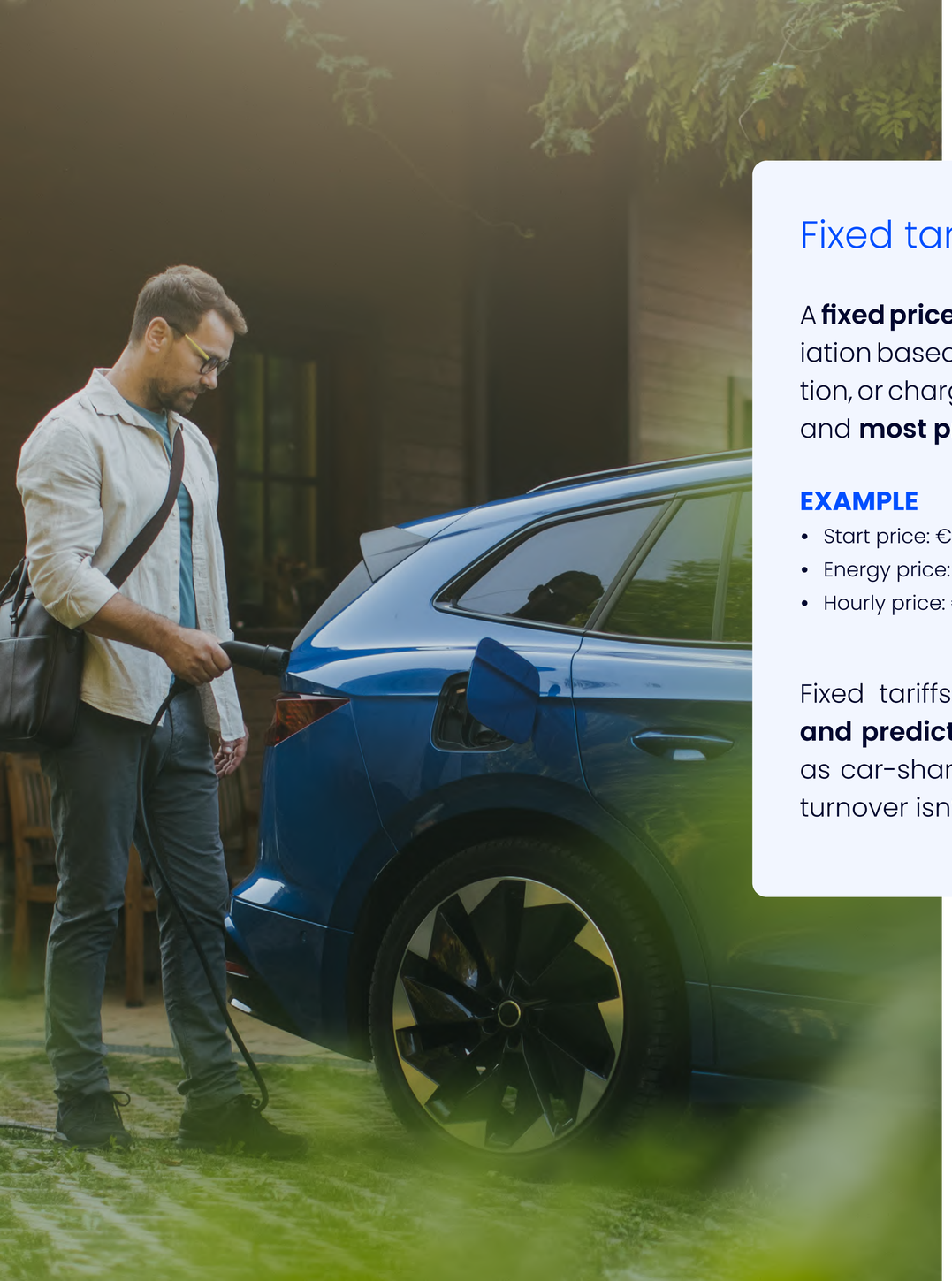
Fixed cost per session, regardless of duration or consumption

ENERGY PRICE

Price per kWh consumed during the session

HOURLY PRICE

Price per hour the charging point is occupied



Fixed tariffs

A **fixed price** for each component. No variation based on time of day, session duration, or charging behavior. It's the simplest and **most predictable** tariff structure.

EXAMPLE

- Start price: €0.30 per session
- Energy price: €1.00 per kWh
- Hourly price: €0.10 per hour

Fixed tariffs are ideal where **simplicity and predictability are the priority**, such as car-sharing fleets or locations where turnover isn't a concern.

Flexible tariffs

A flexible tariff introduces variation into at least one price component. That variation can depend on time of day, session duration, battery State of Charge (SoC), site occupancy, or other operational factors.

For flexible tariffs, we distinguish between **rotation tariffs** (see p.6) and **dynamic tariffs** (see p.9). The broader market uses various other terms for similar or related concepts. Alternative names of threshold tariffs are: time-of-use tariffs, grace periods, overstay fees.

Market insight: Flexible tariffs are no longer just theory; our roaming data show they are a rapidly growing reality. Analysis of roaming sessions between late April and July 2026 reveals that sessions containing an additional hourly surcharge already account for **7.46% of all standard roaming session CDRs** (237,410 out of 3.18 million sessions analyzed).

03 Rotation tariffs
in depth

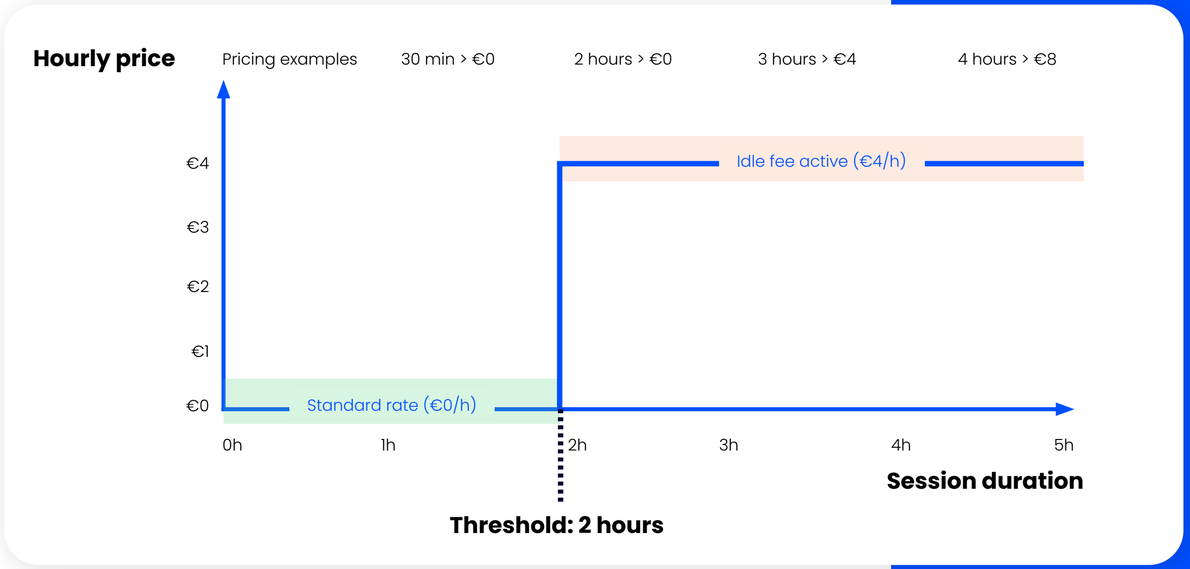
A rotation tariff includes an **idle fee**: an increased hourly rate that kicks in once a vehicle has been parked longer than desired, whether or not the vehicle is still actively charging. The goal isn't to penalize drivers, but to **encourage turnover**. The idle fee always works through the **hourly price component**. Below are the three types Optimile supports.

Type 1 — Threshold-based

The hourly price increases after the session has been running for a set amount of time, regardless of the time of day. Simple and predictable for the driver.

EXAMPLE:

- **Start price:** €0
- **Energy price:** €0.50 per kWh
- **Hourly price:** €0/h for the first 2 hours > €4/h from hour 3 onwards
- **Threshold:** 2 hours



Market insight:
According to our analyzed session data, threshold-based idle fees are the most adopted flexible tariff structure, accounting for over 63% of all flexible charging sessions (150,944 CDRs). For CPOs and hosts, they offer a straightforward, transparent mechanism to prevent overstaying while generating steady surcharge revenue.

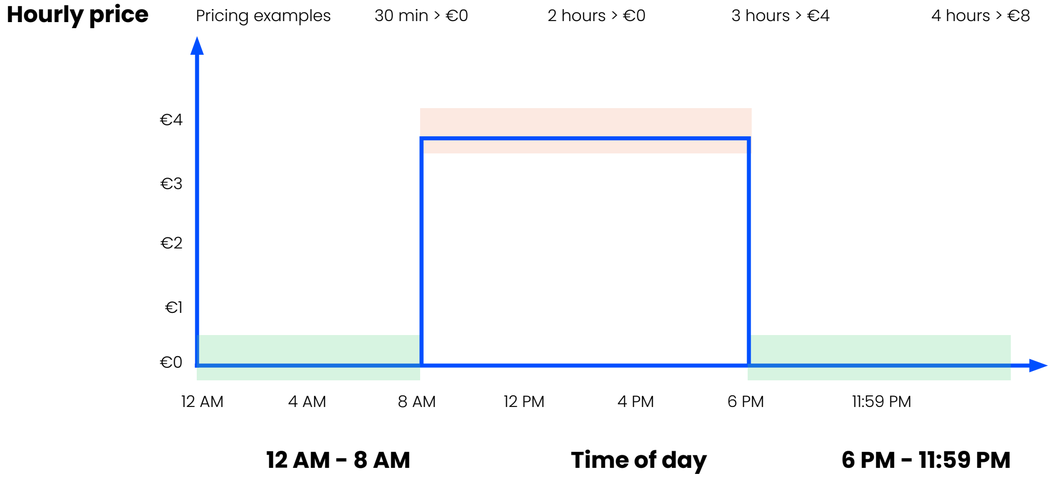
Type 1 — Threshold-based
Pricing examples:
30 min > €0
2 hours > €0
3 hours > €4
4 hours > €8

Type 2 — Time window-based

The hourly price increases during a fixed time window, regardless of how long the session has been running. Useful when you want to address peak hours without threshold logic.

EXAMPLE:

- **Start price:** €0
- **Energy price:** €0.50 per kWh
- **Hourly price:** €0/h outside peak hours > €4/h between 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM

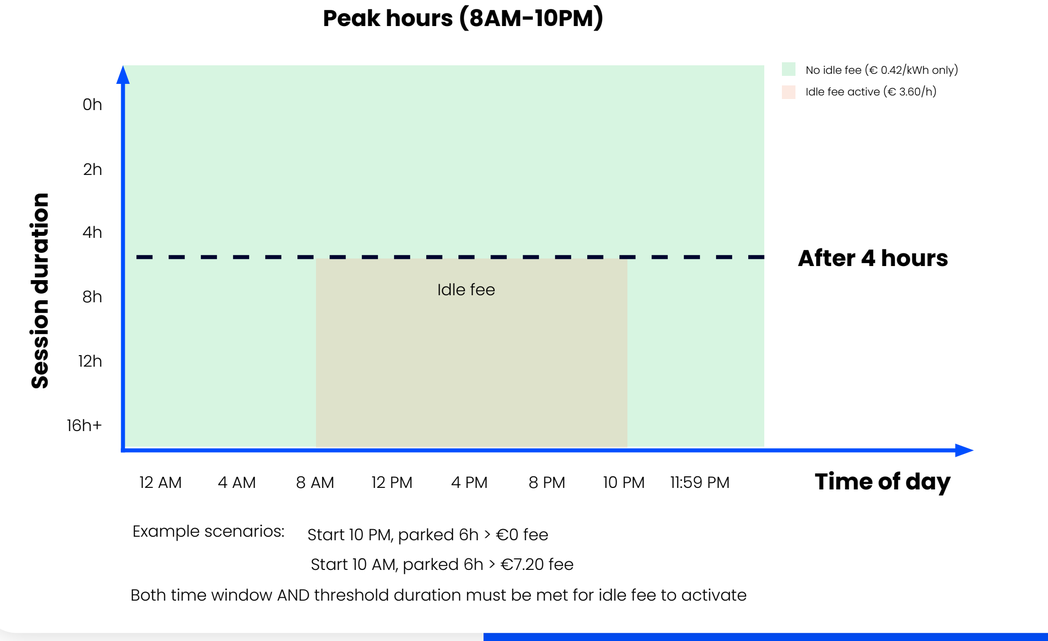


Type 3 — Threshold + time window

The hourly price only increases once the session has exceeded a set duration AND falls within a defined time window. This is the most nuanced option: drivers are never penalized for charging in the evening or overnight, but the idle fee activates at exactly the time and duration where it's actually needed.

EXAMPLE (GHENT, BELGIUM):

- **Start price:** €0
- **Energy price:** €0.42 per kWh
- **Hourly price:** €0/h > €3.60/h between 8:00 AM and 10:00 PM, starting 4 hours after the session begins



04

Tariff types

not yet available in Optimile

The following types are **not available** in the Optimile platform. When a roaming partner configures one of these tariff types, it will be mapped **to the closest supported equivalent**. This is a common practice across the industry.

1. Rotation tariff based on “charging status”

Tariffs based on charging status are difficult to implement fairly. The exact moment a car stops charging isn’t always reliably detectable by the charging point and cannot be reliably communicated across roaming protocols.
A driver might decide to briefly stop and restart a session, and some vehicles can be configured to charge slowly, making it nearly impossible to verify the moment a driver should be charged an idle fee. There are also **legal questions around audit-ability**. Optimile has made a deliberate choice to support this type only once it can be delivered in a correct, robust, and fair way.

EXAMPLE:
Hourly price: €0/h while consuming energy, no SoC > €5/h once the battery is full

2. Congestion tariffs

The idle fee increases when a location's occupancy rate is high, and when the vehicle battery is at or above 80%, or the charging session has ended. This encourages drivers to free up spots during busy periods. This is technically demanding, **not yet standardized across European roaming protocols**, and rarely seen outside Tesla's own network.

EXAMPLE:
Hourly price: €0/h when occupancy is low > €30/h when the station is busy

3. Dynamic tariff

The **energy price varies** in line with electricity markets or dynamic energy contracts. Prices also fluctuate throughout the day, dropping when solar and wind output is high, rising when grid demand peaks. Displaying dynamic tariffs in a legally compliant way is complex: prices are published daily in quarter-hour increments for the next 24 hours, making it difficult to show accurate pricing at session start, and if a session runs past midnight, the following day's rates may not yet be available.

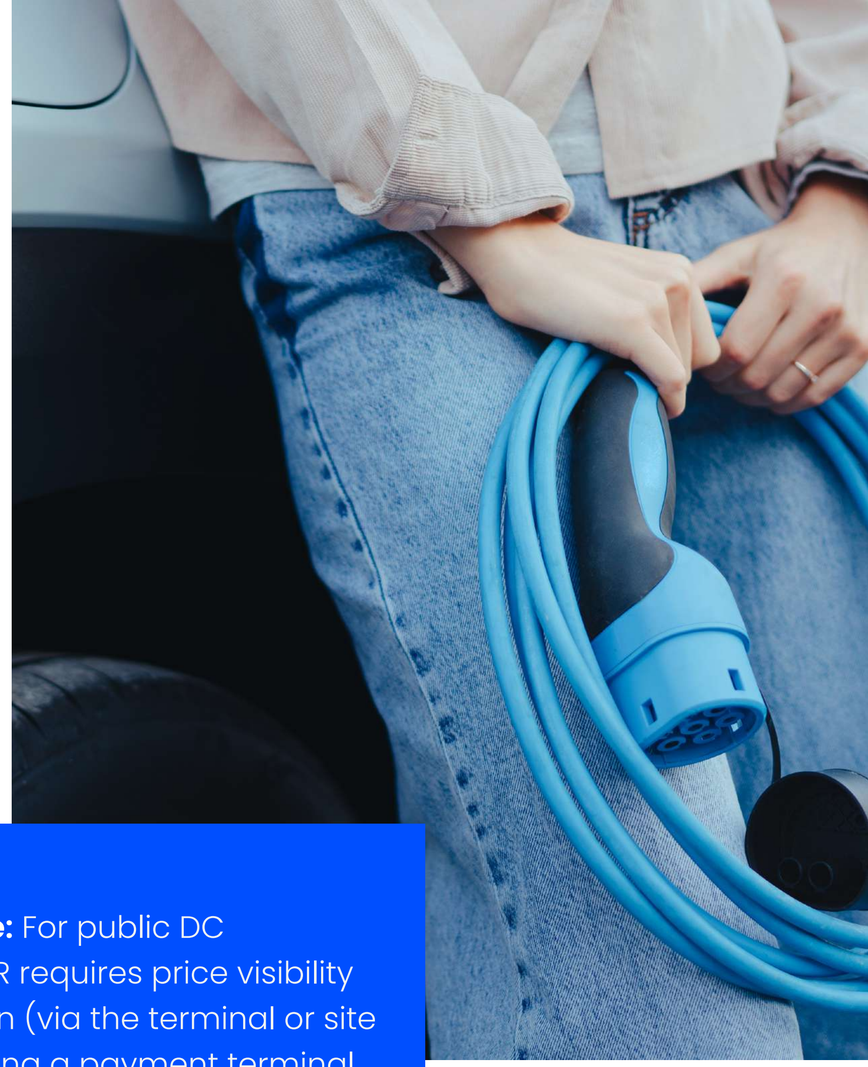
Demand for this tariff type is strong, particularly given **how energy prices have evolved in recent years**. Optimile sees the need clearly and is investigating the possibility of supporting dynamic tariffs.

05 Which tariff is right for you?

There is **no universally "best" tariff**. The right choice depends on who is charging, for how long, and what behavior you want to encourage.

Before reaching for a flexible tariff, **ask yourself whether you actually need one**. Flexible tariffs make sense when idle occupancy is costing you revenue, or when usage is too low at certain times and you want to steer behavior. If neither applies, the added complexity will confuse users without delivering any real benefit, especially given that complex structures often fail to render properly on payment terminals or risk being miscommunicated by eMSPs. When in doubt, keep it simple. Only add complexity when there is a clear need, not just because the option exists.

If flexible tariffs do make sense for your situation, below are **seven common scenarios with a concrete recommendation for each**. This advice is non-binding. It is based on Optimile's experience with CPOs and eMSPs across Europe.



AFIR Compliance Note: For public DC charging (≥50 kW), AFIR requires price visibility at the physical location (via the terminal or site signage). If you are using a payment terminal with a compact display to show rates, opt for a price per kWh to ensure your pricing can actually be rendered on screen.

Scenarios & Recommendations

Supermarket or retail location - managing occupancy

THE SITUATION

Customers park to shop, not to charge. But while they shop, they do expect to charge. The challenge is preventing spots from being occupied for hours beyond that, especially during opening hours.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Use a **rotation tariff with threshold + time window**. Set the threshold to match a realistic shopping duration (e.g. 1–2 hours) and limit the idle fee to your opening hours. This encourages rotation when it matters without penalizing drivers who arrive just before closing.

Supermarket or retail location - attracting traffic

THE SITUATION

Some retailers use charging points to draw customers in rather than steer them away. A lower tariff during opening hours reinforces that signal.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Use a **time window tariff only**. Set a lower price during opening hours to make your location more attractive. No idle fee needed.

Office or residential parking

THE SITUATION

Employees charge during the day, but spots should also be available for residents in the evening. Long daytime sessions block access for others; evening sessions are less of an issue, but shouldn't be free indefinitely.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Use a **rotation tariff with threshold + time window.** Activate the idle fee during office hours to encourage employees to free up spots mid-day or after a full charge. In the evening, deactivate the idle fee to accommodate residents.

Municipality — public street

THE SITUATION

Public charging points serve a wide mix of drivers. Session data shows that AC sessions on public infrastructure frequently exceed 12 hours, long after the battery has stopped charging. This blocks access for other drivers and reduces the value of the infrastructure for the community.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Use a **rotation tariff with threshold + time window**. Set the threshold to reflect a reasonable charging duration (e.g. 3–4 hours based on average AC session data), activate the idle fee during daytime hours when demand is highest, and deactivate it at night to accommodate residents.

Public DC charging

THE SITUATION

DC chargers are **expensive equipment**, which is reflected in higher charging tariffs. That also means idle time represents bigger revenue losses, so optimizing occupancy matters more here than at AC locations.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Use a **rotation tariff with threshold**, set to reflect a reasonable charging duration. A time window is less relevant here: DC chargers are typically used by drivers on the move who can only stop briefly, so occupancy naturally turns over faster. Note that under AFIR guidelines, start costs are not allowed for public DC charging.

Municipality — car sharing

THE SITUATION

Car-sharing vehicles have predictable usage patterns and often use dedicated or reserved spots. Rotation pressure via pricing is less critical here. Operators manage their own fleet behavior.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Use a **fixed tariff.** Car-sharing operators don't need pricing incentives to move their vehicles. A simple, predictable tariff keeps costs predictable and administration low.

Hotel or hospitality venue

THE SITUATION

Guests reasonably expect to charge overnight. Session data confirms AC overnight sessions average 9–11 hours. That's normal behavior and should never be penalized. During the day, however, spots can remain occupied for extended periods by guests who have already checked out or by non-guests.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Use a **rotation tariff with threshold only**. Set a generous threshold that covers a full overnight stay (e.g. 10–12 hours) so guests are never penalized for normal behavior. The idle fee then applies only to sessions that go well beyond what a typical stay requires.

06 Quick reference

Use this table as a starting point when setting or evaluating a tariff for a specific location.

SCENARIO	GOAL	RECOMMENDED TARIFF
Supermarket/retail - managing occupancy	Drive turnover during opening hours	Threshold + time window
Supermarket/retail - attracting traffic	Draw customers in during opening hours	Time window only
Office/residential parking	Turnover during the day, more lenient evenings	Threshold + time window
Municipality — public street	Turnover during peak hours	Threshold + time window
Public DC charging	Optimize occupancy of expensive equipment	Threshold
Municipality — car sharing	Predictable usage, no turnover incentive needed	Fixed tariff
Hotel/hospitality venue	Guests can charge overnight; limit extended daytime stays	Threshold only

Ready to get started?

Flexible tariff configuration is coming to the Optimile platform soon. Want to be among the first to know, or do you have questions about tariff management for your location right now?

Get in touch

Our account managers can help you choose the right tariff structure for your location or network.

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