Solar pv belgium

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2023, 9.9, 2022 1.8 ? 4,254,2018 3,563 ?2015,4%,,7%8%,? 2008 2012,, 2022...

As was common last year in the global solar sector, 2023 proved to be a record-breaking year for Belgium’s solar industry. According to the Belgian energy association, Energie Commune, the country installed 1.8GW of new solar capacity last year, breaking the record for annual installations set in 2022 with 1.3GW of capacity and pushing the country"s total operating solar portfolio to 9.9GW.

While this figure hardly leads the European solar sector, record capacity growth is never a bad thing for the industry, and there is cause for optimism in the future for Belgium"s solar sector. According to trade body SolarPower Europe, Belgium installed around 500W of solar generation capacity per person in 2022, meeting the targets set out in its 2019 National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP). However, SolarPower Europe expects this per-capita capacity to jump to around 1,600W by the end of the decade.

In comparison, Italy"s 2019 NECP set a target of around 800W of solar capacity per person, and the trade body expects it to reach just under 1,200W per person by 2030, suggesting that, on a per capita basis, Belgium"s solar sector will grow exponentially, compared to a country that has already posted impressive capacity addition figures in recent months.

This ambition has been realised by a combination of supportive legislation, with policies such as rooftop solar subsidies and tax reductions making solar more financially viable for Belgians. With this year’s general election offering the potential for leadership change in the country, it remains to be seen if Belgium can keep up its solar sector’s rapid recent growth.

Belgium’s solar sector has expanded its operational capacity fairly consistently in recent years. According to Energie Commune, Belgium"s operating solar capacity has increased each year since 2020, with annual solar production increasing by 23% year-on-year between 2017 and 2018, 20.7% between 2019 and 2020, and a record-breaking 37.1% between 2022 and 2023.

In addition, the years in which total solar generation declined fell by much smaller figures. Since 2013, the largest year-on-year decline in solar generation was just 3.5% between 2015 and 2016.

Notably, 2015 marked the first year that Flanders - Belgium"s northern region that is home to more than half of the country"s population - exceeded the other regions of Wallonia and Brussels in annual capacity installations. Flanders added 69MW of new solar capacity, as shown in the graph below, compared to 37MW in Wallonia and just 4MW in Brussels, representing the nation"s capital city, and Flanders has led national capacity additions every year since.

Strikingly, 2016 and 2017 have solidified Flanders’ position atop Belgian’s three regions, nearly doubling Wallonia"s capacity additions in 2016 and almost tripling this figure in 2017. Part of this is due to legislation benefitting the Flanders solar sector in particular.

In November 2016, the permitting process for new solar projects was streamlined, with new project owners only needing approval from Flemish distributed grid operators Eandis and Infrax rather than approval by the Flemish Electricity and Gas Regulator (VREG).

While the VREG is still involved in granting green power certificates, the body is no longer needed in the day-to-day assessment and permitting associated with new solar power projects, which has accelerated these administrative processes. This is particularly relevant for the Flemish solar industry, which relies heavily on the distributed sector. In 2021, Belgian research institute EnergyVille reported that Belgium as a whole could install 99.6GW of rooftop solar capacity, with 67.6GW of this (or around two-thirds) set to be installed in Flanders.

In the wake of these changes in the Flemish solar sector, the government has implemented a number of new policies for the national solar industry. In February 2021, the government introduced a "social tariff" to cover some of the costs accrued by some of the poorest electricity and gas customers in Belgium; the tariff was extended until April 2022, and the International Energy Agency (IEA) reports that it cost the government a total of EUR600 million (US$651 million) to provide power to around 765,000 people.

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