

Ukraine vivint solar

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The first half of 2023 has seen a revival in Ukraine's solar market as some plants resumed operations, including in recently liberated territories. Demand is also picking up among industrial consumers that wish to be less dependent on the common energy grid in case outages return, reports Ian Skarytsky.

This PV module was damaged by shrapnel in the Kyiv area. Such damage is reportedly commonplace.

Photo: Ukrainian Association of Renewable Energy

The Ukrainian solar power industry has sustained huge losses during the 15 months of fierce hostilities that have followed Russia's invasion, including almost daily barrages of rocket strikes, kamikaze drone attacks, and artillery shelling.

Some 13% of Ukraine's solar generation capacity is in territories controlled by Russian forces while around 8% is considered damaged or completely destroyed. This is according to reports from Oleksiy Orzhel, the recently appointed chairman of the Ukrainian Renewable Energy Association, who has cited official statistical data.

The position is not new for Orzhel, who had already served as chairman for the association before 2019 but left the office to serve as Ukrainian energy and environment minister. He resumed in the role at the renewables association in February after his successor as chair, Oleksandr Kozakevych, joined the armed forces to defend his country on the battlefield.

Working in the renewable energy sector has particular importance for Ukraine since clean power helped the country to survive the cold, dark nights of the last winter, Orzhel said - recalling times when outages lasted for many hours, sometimes days, and it seemed that the stability of the energy grid hung by a thread.

At the time of writing, Ukraine was preparing for its long-awaited military counter-offensive, the importance of which for the future of the country was hard to overestimate. The big push was also being anticipated by solar project owners whose assets remained in the hands of Russia.

"We hope that the Ukrainian counter-offensive will begin soon and that it will be carried out with the least destruction of renewable energy facilities," said Orzhel. "At the moment, the stations near the front line in the unoccupied territories suffer the most from constant artillery shelling."

That hope seems more than justified since there are already examples of how solar plants have resumed operation in the liberated territories. For instance, Ukraine's largest power generation company, DTEK, has recently put the 10 MW Trifomovskaya plant back into operation at 50% generation capacity. The solar plant is located in the Kherson region.

When the western bank of the Dnypro River was retaken by Ukrainian forces, the Trifomovskaya solar project was a sorry sight. Many solar panels were damaged and a proportion of the power generation equipment required replacement.

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