

Solar industry hungary

Hungary had a record year for new solar in 2023, taking its total capacity to more than 5.6 GW. However, analysts warn that government policies are restricting foreign investment, while grid capacity shortfalls could stunt the country's rapid rise.

Hungary deployed 1.6 GW of solar in 2023, according to new figures released by the Hungarian government. Last year's increase is a calendar-year record for Hungary and more than one and half times the capacity additions recorded in 2022.

It takes the country's total solar capacity to more than 5.6 GW. Preliminary figures from transmission system manager MAVIR states Hungary's total solar capacity equate to 3.3 GW of industrial solar power plants and 2.3 GW of household-sized installations.

Hungary posted growth in terms of large-scale and residential solar capacity last year. The country's largest solar power plant to date was connected to the grid, while the number of small, household-sized power plants surpassed a quarter of a million. According to census data, more than one-quarter of residential properties of at least 100 square meters built after 2010 now have solar panels.

In 2024, the Hungarian government says it will continue to support the growth of residential PV through the soon-to-be-launched Napenergia Plusz Program, a grant scheme for the installation of modern solar panel and storage systems with a total budget of HUF 75.8 billion (\$218 million). The scheme, which is expected to support over 15,000 households, opens for applications later this month.

Kinga Máté, a Hungarian legal analyst, told pv magazine that the additional 1.6 GW is a "significant and commendable achievement," but warned "the tightening of foreign direct investment (FDI) rules, particularly the introduction of a pre-emption right for the Hungarian State in solar power plant investments, presents a notable challenge."

"Another novelty introduced by the amendment of the FDI Decree is the more precise description of the solar investments concerned, namely strategic companies that are to be acquired by a foreign investor and have electricity generation registered as their main or other activity in the company register," Máté said. "These restrictive measures may dampen the enthusiasm of foreign investors, potentially limiting the scope of international transactions in Hungary's renewable energy sector. It is a factor that should be considered in every business strategy."

There are also concerns that grid congestion could hamper the rollout of large-scale solar in Hungary. In June, the president of the Hungarian Photovoltaic Industry Association, Péter Szolnoki, told pv magazine that 3 GW of projects that submitted applications in 2022 were told in May that that would not be able to connect before

2028. But he said there is about 5 GW of allocated utility-scale PV capacity set for construction in Hungary over the next four to five years.

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Almost 17 million more European homes were powered by solar in 2023, due to a 40 per cent growth in solar installations from 2022, according to the latest report published by Brussels-based association SolarPower Europe. Compared to the 40 gigawatts (GW) of solar installed in 2022, 2023 brought 55.9 GW of new solar capacity across the EU27, only a few GW away from meeting the IEA recommendations to install around 60 GW of solar power to compensate for the phase-out of Russian gas.

"Solar has continued to deliver for Europe in crisis with record-breaking installations," said Walburga Hemetsberger, CEO of SolarPower Europe. "Now as solar hits its own turning point, Europe must deliver for solar. We are not yet installing the average 70 GW annually needed to meet our 2030 solar targets. It's clear policymakers can't afford to be complacent for the rest of the decade."

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