

Baltic's largest PV rooftop inaugurated

The region's largest rooftop solar system has been mounted on a plastics factory in Lithuania. The 1.4 MW site's inauguration was attended by 100 high-level guests from the nation's business community.

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COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL PV FINANCE MARKETS LITHUANIA



The developer hopes regional neighbors will follow Lithuania's lead.

Image: I+D Energias Lithuania

With a 1.4 MW power rating, the Baltic's largest rooftop PV installation has been inaugurated on top of the factory roof of Retal, a supplier of 'sustainable plastics'.

In the autumn, Sun Investment Group's Lithuanian branch I+D Energias Lithuania installed the PV system, which occupies 1.46 hectares, on the outskirts of Vilnius.

The installer said the EU made funds available to support financing of the €1 million array and Andrius Terskovas, chief business development officer at I+D Energias, told pv magazine Lithuania has been tendering commercial and industrial rooftop PV with the help of the EU since 2017.

Businesses can apply to have up to 80% of the CAPEX cost of a new system covered by a fund established by the EU and government of Lithuania, with almost half of the 42 MW capacity the fund was intended to encourage now tendered. Terskovas expects the final rounds of projects supported by the fund to be held next year, with projects fully implemented by 2021-2022.

Commitment to sustainability

The 1.4 MW Retal rooftop was the biggest to date and received only 45% of its CAPEX costs in subsidies. Terskovas said Retal showed a strong interest in realizing the project and was willing to raise more from its own funds to be certain of securing the tender. The system is owned by Retal and all of its output will be consumed by the factory, under normal conditions. He further explained that the array will provide around 3% of the factory's electricity demand, and will only feed into the grid when the factory closes for maintenance, for example. In such instances, electricity would be sold to the grid for €0.03-0.04/kWh.

Retal president Anatoly Martynov said the investment reflected his company's commitment to sustainability, adding: "The installation of solar panels at our facility in Lentvaris is a key part of Retal's significant investment in sustainability and shows the progressive approach of the whole region. This large-scale project demonstrates our ongoing commitment to environmental protection; we intend to be as efficient as possible in increasing the use of renewable energy across the Retal plants."

The site was inaugurated at an event attended by 100 key representatives from the Lithuanian business community who are keen on adopting renewable energy, as well as equipment suppliers from Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Israel. The guests included Marius Skuodis, Lithuania's deputy minister of economy and innovation, who said the landmark installation will help the country attract energy-intensive industries such as data centers and EV battery manufacturing operations, as the installation demonstrates the country offers opportunities for electricity self consumption to cut costs.

Regional role model

"We are currently looking to attract electricity-heavy industries to Lithuania and we have noticed that many of these types of companies are very concerned regarding the price of electricity and the opportunity to source it from renewables," said Skuodis "Furthermore, the issue of climate change is equally important for the development of Lithuania's economy, as is energy efficiency, reducing electricity prices and the high added value job creation that comes alongside these."

Terskovas said he hoped nearby Poland, Latvia and Estonia would follow suit. "Our region's willingness to embrace renewable technologies to integrate further into Europe is what we are currently undergoing in Lithuania," he said. "We have shown that in Lithuania it is possible to 'go green' with the right partners and the right amount of public awareness. We hope that our neighbors will adopt Lithuania's model and help our region become energy independent and a European hub for renewables."

I+D Energias said Lithuania ranks eighth for renewable energy utilization in the EU and is among the small number of member states which have already achieved the bloc's 20%-by-2020 renewable energy target.

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