

Solar energy market athens

An array of new investment plans were announced in Greece in May, ranging from mega PV projects to battery and electric vehicle production, as well as a move to smart green islands. pv magazine explores the state of these investments and links them to the country's general policy frameworks - most notably, Greece's master plan to boost green investments in former lignite regions and establish a new type of economy.

Coal mining in Ptolemaida, northern Greece. State-owned utility PPC has plans to build 3 GW of solar on former lignite mining sites in the region.

Image: Mvlaxou/Wikimedia

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There is no doubt that Greece's flagship project in the post-lignite era is the development of 3 GW of solar PV capacity in former coal mines from state-owned Public Power Corp. (PPC). Of this, a massive 2 GW solar farm is expected to be built in Ptolemaida, northern Greece, and a 1 GW installation will be developed on the Peloponnese Peninsula in southern Greece.

Both projects are split into several smaller chunks that the utility aims to develop alone or in partnership with other investors. Germany's RWE is one of those investors. A spokesperson for RWE told pv magazine that initially, PPC and RWE signed a memorandum of understanding aiming to "pursue potential collaboration in order to exchange know-how in decarbonization, as well as in the development and implementation of renewable energy projects in Greece." However, added RWE, the two parties have now signed a letter of intent "to strengthen the collaboration and focus initially on the development of solar projects and onshore wind in the Greek market, with a total capacity of at least 2 GW."

RWE chose not to provide further information regarding the timeline and the policy mechanisms supporting this investment. It is widely expected that the two will participate in Greece's future renewable energy tenders aiming to win contracts for projects supported by premium tariffs.

The RWE spokesperson was happy to reveal that although the company's "first strategic focus is on the development and implementation of solar farms ... we always have an eye on developments for energy storage facilities and hybrid projects across all European markets wherever it makes economic sense, including Greece." RWE added that it is currently focusing on a number of solar projects together with PPC within the boundaries of a former open pit lignite mine. However, the two companies may broaden their geographical scope later on.

RWE also recently won a contract to build a combined 14.4 MW photovoltaic farm with a 9.6 MWh storage

facility in Germany's Tagebau Inden open-cast mine and it is very much interested in transferring its experience to Greece, said the RWE spokesperson. The case, though is that Greece, will help RWE to diversify its business and make it fit for the 21st century. Based on figures provided by RWE, by the end of last year, the company had a global solar portfolio of just 229 MW in operation, including PV projects in Europe in the order of 56 MW.

RWE is not the only German investor eyeing Greece with clean technology plans. The country's state investment and trade promotion agency, Enterprise Greece, recently signed an initial agreement with Germany's Next.e.GO Mobile SE, an electric vehicle manufacturer, to establish a production facility in Greece.

The agreement refers to an "in principle collaboration," which sees the two parties form a working group to detail the framework and conditions for the implementation of the full-scale manufacturing facility of the German company in Greece. Should this collaboration come to fruition, Greece will acquire its first local manufacturing base for electric vehicles. Next.e.GO Mobile SE also intends to establish a Technology and Innovation Campus (TIC) in Greece.

Another recent development currently being implemented is a move by Athens-based Sunlight to expand its local R&D and battery manufacturing bases.

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