

Overall
Score

7



2022
Score

4




Summary

Although there is a slight improvement, Bulgaria still remains the worst performing country in the EU when it comes to the rollout of rooftop solar PVs. Bulgaria's government outlines plans for renewable energy, yet lacks concrete strategies for rooftop solar installations despite the country's high solar potential. While a draft strategy exists, it lacks support for decentralised renewable projects. Incentives do include a solar rebate scheme, but bureaucratic hurdles limit its effectiveness, and recent legislative changes affect surplus energy purchase. Complex permitting procedures hinder small-scale solar adoption, with most installations happening on the ground. Although energy sharing and community initiatives are mentioned in legislation, specifics are lacking. The Renewable Sources Act introduces definitions for energy communities but lacks safeguards against corporate influence. Further actions are needed from the Ministry of Energy to address these issues and promote the development of rooftop solar across Bulgaria.

Scoring System

This country profile highlights the good and the bad policies and practices of solar rooftop PV development within Bulgaria. It examines and scores six key areas: governance, incentives & support schemes, permitting procedures, energy sharing schemes, energy communities and additional measures to support solar PV development. For this update, we will have the 2022 score to the right as a benchmark:

The scoring system is set out below:

-  Green = 4-5 points
-  Orange = 2-3 points
-  Red = 0-1 points



Country Profile Bulgaria



The Good



Renewable Energy Goals: A draft strategy for sustainable energy development in Bulgaria until 2030, with a scope towards 2050, has been elaborated, indicating a commitment to transitioning towards sustainable energy sources.



Solar Rebate Scheme: The government has launched a solar rebate scheme of €30 million to encourage households to adopt rooftop solar PV systems.



Legislative Changes: Recent legislative changes have eased rules for rooftop solar installations, removing the need for construction permits and streamlining the process, potentially facilitating greater adoption.



Recognition of Energy Communities: The Renewable Sources Act of 2023 recognises the concept of energy communities and prosumers.



Country Profile Bulgaria



The Bad



Lack of Concrete Planning: Despite setting renewable energy targets, there is a lack of specific plans or roadmaps for rooftop solar installations as Bulgaria's solar target remains low. PV will only account for 2.6% of electricity production in 2040.



Bureaucratic Hurdles: Complaints about bureaucratic processes and excessive requirements for incentive programs suggest that administrative barriers may hinder participation in renewable energy initiatives.



Complex Permitting Procedures: Complicated permitting procedures for solar installations, though recently eased, have historically been a barrier to small-scale solar adoption, potentially limiting progress towards renewable energy goals.



Lack of Specifics in Legislation: While legislation mentions energy communities, there is a lack of specific details or safeguards to ensure their effectiveness and prevent corporate influence, potentially hindering their development and impact.

2024 : Governance 1

2022 Score : 1

The Bulgarian NECP in force for 2021-2030 foresees the development of the RES sector to 27%, but it does not set a meaningful roadmap or plan for rooftop installations. In fact, Bulgaria's solar target remains low as PV will only account for 2.6% of electricity production in 2040. Yet Bulgaria benefits from high irradiation rates, notably in the south of the country, and has an important solar potential, which is not reflected in the current target¹. The first revised NECP draft was published late (December 2023), and yet contains no data on concrete numbers. The modeling of how different scenarios will impact the development of the energy sector and the whole industry was also not included. It is mentioned that by March 2024, the modeling will be presented.

A draft strategy for sustainable energy development for the Republic of Bulgaria until 2030, with a scope towards 2050, has been elaborated, which reflects the ideas and policies of the state for the development of the energy sector. Yet it does not contain any solid approaches supporting the development of renewable energy projects for self consumption, even though it mentions the concept of “decentralized ownership of the electrical grid” which is a new approach.

1. <https://www.solarpowereurope.org/advocacy/national-energy-and-climate-plans>

2024 : Incentives 1

2022 Score : 2

In 2023, the Ministry of Energy launched a solar rebate scheme with 30M Euros to help households reduce their carbon footprint and lower their electricity bills. Homeowners can apply for financial support for the installation of rooftop solar PV systems of up to 10 kWp, which may be paired with battery energy storage systems. The PV systems no larger than 10 kWp will be financed up to 70% with the maximum sum of BGN 15,000. In order to receive funding, households must be the applicant's permanent place of residence.² However, there are complaints about the whole procedure being too bureaucratic and some of the requirements being excessive, so few people have applied. The second stage from this program is expected to be developed in 2024 with prioritization for energy poor households.

There is a feed-in tariff defined by the Regulator annually. When the energy is also used for self consumption, the excesses dispatched to the grid are purchased at a price equal to the forecast market price defined by the regulator for such installations. However the recent revision of the Renewable Sources Act in 2023³ has removed the obligation for the Distribution System Operators (DSO) to purchase the surplus energy produced by the prosumers. As a result, many contracts between the DSOs and the prosumers have been discontinued without any notice. Even with the existence of these incentives, there are still not many small rooftop PV projects developed in recent years benefiting from the feed-in tariff and most of the installations are developed mainly by professionals or people who have experience in the business sector, not by customers who lack the necessary knowledge or expertise.

The procedures with public authorities for EU funding is usually administratively burdensome and many businesses prefer to opt out of those. They lack publicity and transparency. On the other hand, the government has not applied for any European funds for the development of energy communities or prosumerism.

2. <https://www.pv-magazine.com/2023/05/11/bulgaria-launches-household-solar-rebate-scheme/>

3. <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/bulgaria-simplifies-procedure-for-rooftop-solar-installations/> <https://www.me.government.bg/bg/library/zakon-za-energiyata-ot-vazobnovyaemi-iztochnici-167-c25-m1515-1.html>

2024 : Permitting 2

2022 Score : 1

The production cost of solar power has fallen to record lows in recent years, but this has been to the benefit of large investors mostly and has not yet reached consumers, due to procedures being too complicated and bureaucratic. This may be the explanation as to why, unlike in other countries, the majority of solar power installations are not on roofs, but on the ground.⁴ The procedure of grid connection is developed with the DSO, and until recently, the confirmation of the grid connection was needed to obtain a construction permit. However, a new legislation has been introduced that eases the rules for the installation of rooftop solar systems for own use, and removes the requirement for a construction permit and for the submission of a project for systems of up to 20 kW.

Instead of a building permit, there will be a notification regime, according to which the owner will notify the local authority of their intention to install solar panels and the project will become valid if the municipality does not object within 14 days.⁵ The so called “center for administrative service” (one stop shop) was also introduced in the recent revision of the Renewable Sources Act in 2023⁶ in order to unify most of the permit related procedures. However, the Municipalities have expressed their concerns in regards to the lack of human resources required to properly implement this new provision. There are also frequent negative grid connection statements by DSOs which are often ungrounded, which can be attributed to lack of transparency issues.⁷

4. <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/bulgaria-to-abolish-limitations-for-rooftop-solar-panels-for-own-use/>

5. <https://www.me.government.bg/bg/library/zakon-za-energiyata-ot-vazobnovyaemi-iztochnici-167-c25-m1515-1.html>

6. https://www.eclareon.com/sites/default/files/res_policy_monitoring_database_final_report_01.pdf

7. <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/bulgaria-simplifies-procedure-for-rooftop-solar-installations/>



2024 : Energy Sharing 0

2022 Score : 0

Energy sharing was included in the recent revision of the Renewable Sources Act of 2023 as part of the potential actions and measures that the energy communities or the jointly acting self consumer can carry on. As of now, however, there are no specifications or drafts on how the actual sharing will be carried out yet.⁸

8. <https://www.me.government.bg/bg/library/zakon-za-energiyata-ot-vazobnovaemi-iztochnici-167-c25-m1515-1.html>

2024 : Energy Communities 2

2022 Score : 0



^{9.} The Renewable Sources Act published in October 2023 introduced for the first time the definitions for prosumers, renewable and citizen energy communities. However, the text is merely a copy paste from the European directives with generic provisions, for instance, that “energy communities should be encouraged by the removal of the unreasonable administrative and regulatory burdens” and that nondiscriminatory treatment and access to energy for vulnerable citizens should be ensured. The new provisions do not specify legal criteria and safeguards to prevent the participation of big energy companies with decisive influence in such communities and there are no regulatory guarantees that end-users of energy will retain their rights versus grid operators and energy suppliers. The Sustainable Energy Development Agency (SEDA) has defined the obstacles and the potential of the development of energy communities and has presented them to the Ministry of Energy, which needs to take action in this regard.

9. <https://www.me.government.bg/bg/library/zakon-za-energijata-ot-vazobnovyaemi-iztochnici-167-c25-m1515-1.html>

2024 : Additional measures 1

2022 Score : 0

According to SolarPower Europe, Bulgaria reached 1.5 GW of cumulative installed PV capacity at the end of 2022.¹⁰ There are significant delays in the deployment of solar rooftop by citizens due to lack of knowledge, training programmes and informational campaigns, even though its high potential in terms of solar irradiation. There are also grid issues that have not been properly addressed. In October 2022, Bulgaria's electricity system operator revealed that it had accepted applications to build new renewable energy projects with an aggregate installed capacity of more than 24 GW, which double the country's installed generating capacity, but those projects require a significant expansion of the grid.¹¹ In 2023, the EIB confirmed a priority investment of almost €160M for modernisation and development of the information systems and physical infrastructure of the grid in Bulgaria.¹³ In 2023, Bulgaria achieved a penetration rate of smart meters below 1%.¹⁴ Eurelectric clarified that 34% of the meters in Bulgaria have remote functionalities, but that they do not fully comply with the EU smart metering legislation. Recently in 2023, the European Investment Bank distributed 300 million euros for the roll out of smart meters in Bulgaria, but recent developments show that the distribution companies are not going to make use of them and are going to return the funding.

10. <https://www.solarpowereurope.org/insights/market-outlooks/global-market-outlook-for-solar-power-2023-2027-1>

11. <https://www.pv-magazine.com/2022/10/10/bulgarian-grid-operator-reviewing-connection-requests-for-24-gw-of-renewables/>

12. https://modernisationfund.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/COMMISSION-DECISION-of-30.05.2023-on-disbursement-of-revenues-of-the-Modernisation-Fund-under-Directive-2003_87_EC-of-the-European-Parliament-and-of-the-Council-Annex.pdf

13. <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/central-eastern-europe-severely-lagging-in-smart-meters-rollout/>

14. https://modernisationfund.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/COMMISSION-DECISION-of-30.05.2023-on-disbursement-of-revenues-of-the-Modernisation-Fund-under-Directive-2003_87_EC-of-the-European-Parliament-and-of-the-Council-Annex.pdf

Engaging citizens and local communities in the solar revolution

The Rooftop Solar PV Comparison Report update produced by CAN Europe and its member organisations aims to detect barriers at national level that impede a higher uptake of residential rooftop solar PV, highlight best and bad practices, and to put forward concrete policy recommendations for setting up the right regulatory framework to ensure an accelerated uptake of rooftop solar PV.

11 countries were chosen to be assessed and scored on their performance regarding the development of rooftop solar PV within their country.

For the full report, follow the link below:

<http://caneurope.org/rooftop-solar-pv-comparison-report>

