

From [North Macedonia](#) to Bosnia investors are backing solar energy projects, despite distribution problems. **Western Balkan** nations are seeing a boom in **solar power investment**, but their grids are lagging behind.

Renewables could help ease the power crisis as countries shift away from coal. But industry officials say distribution systems are not prepared for new energy feeds. Grid expansion, energy storage and tightened regulations are just a few ways countries aim to combat the problem.

### **North Macedonia has become a hub for renewables**

In North Macedonia, investors are “quite furiously” investing in [solar plants](#), according to Economy Minister Kreshnik Bekteshi. His country, which is a power importer, has become a regional hub for renewable energy sources.

Since 2021, solar parks with 139 Megawatt (MW) capacity have been built. The country plans to produce up to **300 MW** of new solar energy by the end of 2023. This is enough to supply eight towns with electricity, says Marko Bislimovski, the president of North Macedonia’s Energy Regulatory Commission.

However, transmission and distribution grids are not prepared to absorb such sudden feeds of solar energy.

“Our grid can afford the transmission of about **1,300 MW** of photovoltaic energy, and our distributive network has capacity for 700-800 MW while there is a plan for transmission of 5,000 MW,” says Bislimovski. “So we have problems.”

### **Solar energy is also booming in Bosnia**

Solar plants have also mushroomed across [Bosnia](#), the only Balkan country that exports electricity. In the southern Herzegovina region, Stolac - the town that pioneered the use of solar energy 12 years ago - has now become a big construction site.

“We plan production capacity from solar energy of up to **600 MW**,” says Stolac Mayor Stjepan Boskovic. However, he cautions that the plan depends on transmission lines’ capacity and the readiness of state agencies to expand it accordingly.

Boskovic says that private and public companies have bid for projects worth about 1 billion Bosnian marka (€512 million) in the area.

### **How can counties combat their energy distribution problems?**

North Macedonia will need to expand its distribution grids in order to accept and balance the energy, Bislimovski says.

The other solution, though costly, is to store the electricity, which is generated during daylight hours only. Legislation in [North Macedonia](#) was therefore amended to require

## Western Balkans see boom in solar energy investment but their grids are unprepared

investors to secure battery storage of electricity in areas where the grid is already booked. **Solar panel producers** warn of additional problems associated with a rise in [renewables](#). Poor control has led to a rise in companies installing solar panels without a licence amid spiralling demand. This often leads to technical glitches and could inflict huge damage on the country's energy system.

“People focus on the price and how quickly the works will complete, not thinking about far-reaching consequences for both the investors and the grid,” says Goran Paunov, the owner and general manager of KMG EOL Kvazar, a Skopje-based solar panels producer.

Source: Euronews green