



Photo: Ministério da Economia e da Inovação

Apart from spectacular projects such as the 46 megawatt Amareleja/Moura park, completed 2009, PV development has only played a minor role in Portugal so far.

Erratic promotion

Portugal: Compared with other renewable energy sources, PV is still being treated in a very haphazard way in Europe's sunniest country.

The Alentejo region in the interior of southern Portugal: a broad, hilly landscape with evergreen old cork oaks, gnarled olive trees, fields of wheat and sunflowers that sway in the wind, small towns that have not changed much since the Middle Ages. Not many know that this region far from the industrial centers in the north and the country's heart is the main area for technological development of solar energy in the country.

In 2007 the first double-digit PV project was built here, the GE Energy 11-megawatt project in Brinches/Serpa, at the time the largest in the world. Also here is the 46-megawatt Amareleja/Moura park, which was completed in 2009. Alentejo is also the home of Portugal's first module maker: Rui Lobo, CEO of Lobosolar/Open Renewables, a man who likes not just to discuss but to do. He does not think that Spain's short-lived solar boom of 2007 to 2008 is an example to follow: "A small, but effective subsidy program for PV is better for the sector than a mega-program without sustainable results."

The electrical engineer knows what he's talking about: the medium-sized family

firm Grupo Lobo, founded in 1984 in Évora with its core business supplying precision components for the industry, can look back on 16 years of experience in the assembly of PV systems for leading manufacturers. Using German production lines, the quality certified company had assembled over 800,000 OEM PV modules by 2006, at first exclusively for a Siemens Solar/E.ON joint venture, then for the solar division of oil giant Shell. When Shell sold its solar business to Solarworld in 2006, the Lobosolar Group started up production on their own with newly-founded Open Renewables. The first solar module producer in Portugal was focused on the international market from the start and at the end of 2006 found a joint venture partner in the system house SES 21 AG, who opened up access to the growing German PV market for the Portuguese company.

Lobo wishes that politicians had a long-term strategic vision of PV in Portugal. For him the failure of a "clear communication of medium and long-term strategies for the sector has led to a lack of stability" in the PV market. Thanks to state

subsidy programs for renewable energy sources, above all for wind energy, Portugal has experienced rapid growth since 2005 and set itself further ambitious goals for expansion up to 2020.

The National Energy Strategy (ENE 2020), which was adopted in mid-2010, envisages that 31 percent of the final energy consumption and 60 percent of electricity consumption should come from renewable sources. In general, the government seems to be on the right track despite the economic crisis: data from the national energy agency Direcção-Geral de Energia e Geologia (DGEG) shows that electricity consumption from renewable energy has more than doubled from 16.8 percent in 2005 to 35 percent in 2009. For the previous year the Portuguese grid operator REN (Redes Energéticas Nacionais) estimates the proportion of renewable sources for electricity consumption at over 50 percent. Up to now, the main driver of this positive balance was wind energy, the installed capacity of which has increased six-fold in the last five years. Relative to population size the ten-million-strong country is in