



# Solar energy is driving the energy transition

KEY 2026, organised by Italian Exhibition Group, closed on 6th March with results exceeding expectations, spotlighting the expanding role of solar energy. The next edition will take place from 10th to 12th March 2027.



Looking ahead, the sector is expected to maintain a strong growth trajectory. According to forecasts by the International Energy Agency in its latest renewables outlook, solar PV is set to dominate capacity additions in Europe through the end of the decade, with cumulative installed capacity projected to exceed 600 GW by 2030.

This expansion is supported by continued electrification trends, the rollout of energy storage solutions and the strategic role of solar in enhancing energy independence and resilience, particularly in the context of ongoing geopolitical and energy security challenges.

Within this sustained growth and increasing strategic relevance, solar energy is also gaining prominence across major industry platforms, where market trends, policy developments and technological innovation converge.

Events bringing together the full renewable value chain are becoming key enablers of collaboration and business opportunities, supporting the sector's continued expansion. In this framework, the last edition of KEY – The Energy Transition Expo, organised by Italian Exhibition Group, confirmed its role as a leading event for the energy transition across Europe, Africa and the Mediterranean basin.

Held at the Rimini Expo Centre from 4th to 6th March, it brought together a broad range of renewable energy stakeholders, including those active in solar, fostering exchange, networking and international cooperation.

Over three days, the event showcased innovative solutions for decarbonisation and hosted numerous conferences and business meetings. Results once again exceeded expectations, with a 10% increase in total attendance, a 9% rise in international visitors and strong investor participation, highlighting growing interest in the technologies and market trends shaping the future of solar energy and the broader energy transition.

#### Significant growth in the solar exhibition sector

SEC – Solar Expo & Conferences, KEY 2026 exhibition area dedicated to solar energy and photovoltaics, established itself as an innovative technological showcase, developed in collaboration with the Italian Association Italia Solare, providing an opportunity to explore the potential of solar energy across all applications, from residential systems to utility-scale projects, including industrial photovoltaics and agrivoltaics.

This area recorded significant growth, confirming both the solidity of the market and the maturity of the technology, with a strong presence of EPC contractors, agrivoltaic solutions and companies specialised in system mounting and fixing.

Solar energy continues to strengthen its position as a central pillar of Europe's energy transition, driven by sustained deployment rates and increasing competitiveness across markets.

In 2025, the European Union installed approximately 65 GW of new solar PV capacity, bringing the total installed capacity to over 330 GW, according to the latest EU Market Outlook for Solar Power published by SolarPower Europe.

This growth confirms solar as the fastest-expanding renewable technology in the region, supported by declining costs, policy support and accelerated permitting frameworks in several Member States.

Solar energy's contribution to the electricity mix has also reached unprecedented levels. In 2025, solar generation accounted for around 13% of the EU's total electricity production, contributing, together with wind, to a record share of renewables surpassing fossil fuels for the first time, as highlighted in the European Electricity Review by Ember.

This milestone underscores the structural transformation of Europe's power system, where solar is increasingly playing a key role thanks to its scalability, short construction times and adaptability across utility-scale and distributed applications.

During the exhibition, SEC brought together manufacturers and distributors of specialised technologies, including photovoltaic modules and cells, inverters, support structures to ensure system stability and durability, monitoring systems and components. A wide range of operators and service providers were also present, covering areas such as operation & maintenance, financial services, utilities, energy traders and ESCOs, offering a comprehensive overview of the entire solar value chain.

The exhibition was complemented by a programme of in-depth sessions on key sector topics, reinforcing the event's role as a platform for knowledge exchange, updates and networking for companies and trade associations.

**A new layout**

KEY 2026 introduced several new features within its exhibition project. One of the highlights was a dedicated hall for EPC contractors (Engineering, Procurement & Construction), banks and financial institutions, integrated into the extensive thematic area on solar energy.

The wind energy sector, which continues to experience strong growth, featured the Su.port – Sustainable Ports for Energy Transition initiative. This focus addressed the electrification of port docks to enhance

maritime sustainability and explored the role of ports as logistics hubs for the assembly and maintenance of floating renewable energy parks, as well as for hydrogen storage and transportation.

In the energy efficiency area, a long-standing pillar of KEY that again played a central role across all sectors, from industry, including energy-intensive industries, to the residential sector and the built environment, visitors encountered a new project: HOME – Healthy, Optimized, Measured, Efficient.

The area included a full-scale replica of a 100% smart, efficient and sustainable house, serving as an educational and cultural space where attendees could learn how energy efficient and healthy buildings are designed, constructed and monitored.

**KEY 2026 exceeds expectations**

The 2026 edition of KEY served as an outstanding platform for industrial and technological expertise from Europe and beyond. Spanning a total exhibition area of 125,000 square meters across 24 halls, the event featured over 1,000 exhibiting brands, including 320 international companies, presenting products and innovations across seven key sectors: photovoltaics, wind power, hydrogen, energy storage, energy efficiency, e-Mobility and Sustainable City.

International engagement was notable, with 530 hosted buyers and delegations from 59 countries participating, facilitated by the support of the Italian Trade Agency (ITA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI).

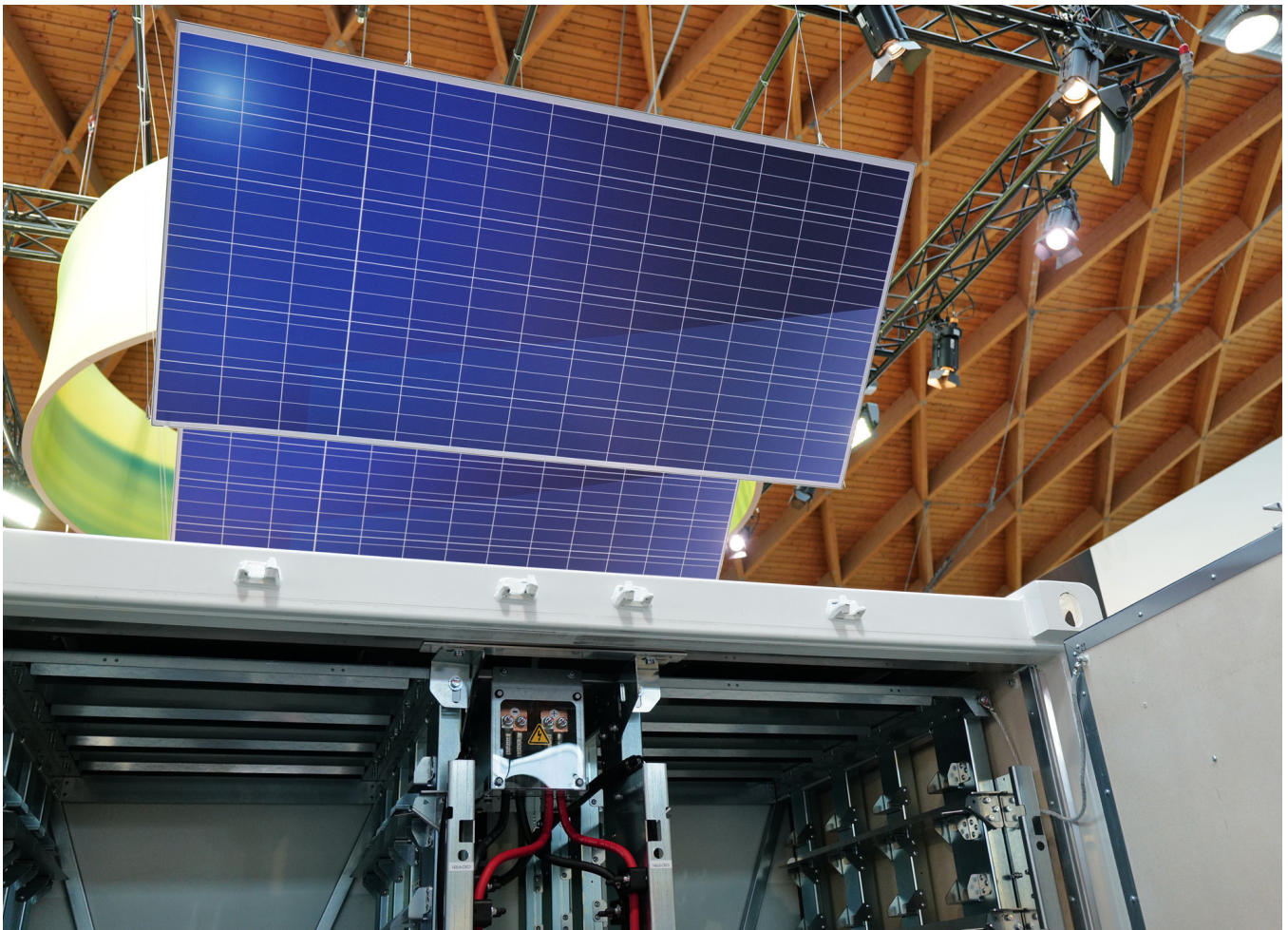
The event also attracted 412 accredited journalists from around the world, who provided coverage and shared insights on the rapidly evolving clean energy sector, a field that remains central to building a sustainable future.

**Green skills and innovation for tomorrow**

Technological innovation and the growing demand for sustainable skills were at the heart of the Innovation District, an area entirely dedicated to the innovation ecosystem. Within this space, 32 innovative Italian and international start-ups and SMEs showcased their most promising projects and solutions, taking part in one of Europe's leading events on the future of energy.

Simultaneously, the Green Jobs & Skills initiative played a key role in facilitating dialogue and direct interactions between the demand for green skills and the job market. According to the World Energy Employment 2025 report by the International Energy Agency, the sector is growing at twice the rate of the overall economy, yet continues to face a





shortage of newly qualified professionals relative to rising demand.

On the evening of 4th March, the Lorenzo Cagnoni Innovation Awards ceremony took place, awarding one prize for each of the seven product categories in the Rimini Expo Centre halls. The awards recognized the seven start-ups with the highest innovative potential and the seven exhibiting companies that distinguished themselves through their cutting-edge approach.

#### **Main topics and conferences**

Over the three days of the event, KEY featured an extensive programme of 160 conferences, distinguished by their high quality and rigorous scientific approach. This underlined KEY's standing as one of Europe's leading events, highlighting the diversity and comprehensiveness of both its exhibition and content, which make it unique among European trade shows focused on the energy sector.

The event served as an open, strategic forum for discussion, where international expertise, data, know-how, and best practices were exchanged and systematized to support the acceleration of the energy transition.

The discussions covered a wide range of topics, including the critical role of energy efficiency in decarbonisation, energy storage and the application of artificial intelligence to optimise electricity grids, forecast renewable energy production and manage energy flows in real time.

Finance received significant attention, with debates on new investment models, capital allocation for renewable projects and innovative tools to control energy costs. Participants explored new financing mechanisms, green bonds, sustainable project bonds and participatory models engaging citizens, businesses, and communities.

Through these exchanges, KEY 2026 reinforced its role as an international hub and a key meeting point for all stakeholders in the energy transition, bringing together engineers, technology developers, investors and institutions to address pressing challenges such as making renewable projects bankable, accelerating implementation, and reducing risks.

Associations and industry representatives also emphasized the urgent need to enhance grid flexibility and establish clear regulatory

frameworks to foster investment and market competitiveness.

#### **DPE - International Electricity EXPO**

In conjunction with KEY, a new appointment with DPE - International Electricity Expo, the event specifically for the electrical generation, transmission, distribution, safety and automation ecosystem, also took place this year.

The event was organised by Italian Exhibition Group in collaboration with the Distributed Generation Association – Motors, Components, Generating Sets, a confederate of ANIMA Confindustria, and Federazione ANIE.

#### **KEY CHOICE - Unlock the future of PPAS**

Lastly, on Tuesday 3rd March at Rimini's Palacongressi Conference Centre, KEY was preceded by a successful new edition of KEY CHOICE - Unlock the future of PPAs, the B2B event organised by Italian Exhibition Group in collaboration with Elemens.

#### **Looking forward to KEY 2027**

After the record results of the 2026 edition, KEY is already racing towards its next edition that will be held at Rimini Expo Centre from 10th to 12th March 2027.

[key-expo.com/en](https://key-expo.com/en)