



Powering a better tomorrow

Pol Spronck, Managing Director of Solarwatt Technologies Ltd, talks to PES about the company's mission to make clean energy easily accessible to as many people as possible. What are the products, services and solutions that will make this happen and how far have they come in their journey so far?

PES: Welcome to PES Pol. Solarwatt is a new name to the magazine so it would be good to get some brief background to the company to start with.

Pol Spronck: Solarwatt was founded 30 years ago in Dresden, Germany, quickly building a reputation as a premium quality solar manufacturer. We are one of the pioneers of glass-glass solar panels and the European market leader with this innovative solar technology.

The company is almost 100% owned by Stefan Quandt, the main shareholder of the BMW Group, and is one of the longest standing German solar panel manufacturers. We are renowned for our premium quality, robust and reliable products and solutions that come with the best guarantees in the industry.

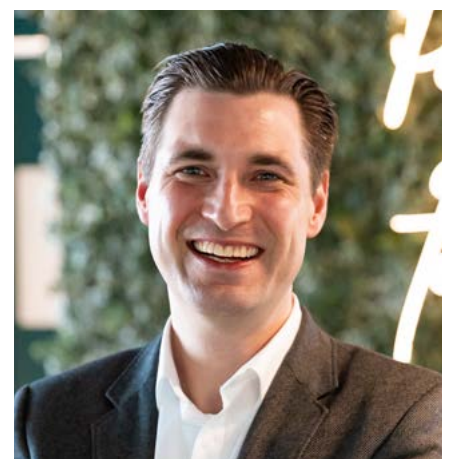
PES: Is it true you have several subsidiaries in Europe and the UK?

PS: We have five subsidiaries throughout Europe. We expanded our international reach in 2015, firstly in The Netherlands and France, followed by Spain and Italy. In 2021 we formed a subsidiary in the UK and Ireland. In the UK our panels are stocked in our warehouse in Leamington Spa and held at strategic locations throughout Europe, minimising lead times so we are ready to meet our customer's needs.

By 2021 Solarwatt Group's turnover was €160m, reaching €330m by the end of 2022. And we are on track to hit €500m in 2023.

PES: How do the various subsidiaries differ in terms of demand and how advanced they are in their journeys towards sustainability, from your point of view?

PS: Across all our subsidiaries and in all markets our vision is the same. Solarwatt wants to be lifelong friends with people who want to increase their use of clean energy, and our partners who enable others to do the same. As a company, we act according to the standard of maximum sustainability as a driver of future viability for our planet. Through responsible and environmentally friendly use of resources, we make a small contribution every day to ensure we are powering a better tomorrow.



Pol Spronck



Our high-quality, long-lasting products are the most durable and sustainable on the market. Our Panel vision GM modules are cradle to cradle certified and glass-glass panels have the lowest CO₂ footprint per kWh. We are proud to be the first German solar manufacturer to meet the independent and globally recognised circular economy standard for our glass-glass modules.

As a company, we set our sustainability goals high. Through responsible and environmentally friendly use of resources, we are contributing on a daily basis to ensure we all have a future worth living. This remains at our very core.

PES: Tell us more about what you offer. Your focus is on making it easy for people to start generating solar energy isn't it?

PS: We are on a mission to make clean energy easily accessible to as many people as possible, by delivering high performing and reliable German designed solar panels. We follow specific standards to ensure that our panel range is environmentally friendly and work continuously to mitigate our carbon footprint.

Together with our partners, we are united by a shared vision of harnessing the sun's energy to combat climate change and power a better tomorrow. Also, as part of our mission, we are actively seeking reputable solar installers to expand our installer base

and focus on making our quality solar solutions available in both residential and commercial settings.

By installing solar panels on rooftops, open spaces, and even in remote areas, individuals and businesses can generate their own clean electricity and reduce their dependence on the traditional energy grid. Solarwatt solar panels are guaranteed to last for decades and offer peace of mind with extensive European warranties.

PES: What kind of guarantees are you able to offer on your solutions?

PS: With a Solarwatt system our customers opt for longevity and security. We offer the most comprehensive and best guarantees on the market. Our 30-year product and performance warranties on our entire vision glass-glass range protect our customers against module faults, and disproportionate degradation in module performance throughout the entire usage period, also covering reinstallation and transport costs.

In addition to this, we also offer a five-year all-risk Full Coverage insurance which includes material damage, construction faults, and sabotage, offering compensation for the loss of use that occurs. This offers 100% protection against external damage not just for the panel, but the entire PV system. As a German manufacturer with an extensive international network, of over

8,500 installers our teams can support customers should issues arise at every stage of the process.

PES: Quality is important of course, but safety assurance is also crucial. How do you qualify this in terms of certification on your products?

PS: Safety and the integrity of our products are of utmost importance to us. We are proud that our factories, laboratories, and products hold the highest quality standards certification. Our panels are rigorously tested over and above the IEC norms. Solarwatt solar panels are subjected to various PV stress tests. By testing our panels' resistance to both mechanical stress and weather simulations, we not only ensure the highest premium quality and standards, but we can prove the longer lifespan and better performance of our glass-glass panels. For example, our glass-glass panels are tested in our climate chambers, with DHT, temperature cycle tests, etc, which is three times the industry standards and these panels also allow 8.100 pa load.

Our testing is all conducted in-house as we have a fully VDE-certified lab which is frequently audited. To ensure the highest quality, our solar panels are also tested for: PID degradation, LeTID degradation, fire protection, resistance against extreme weather conditions such as hail, wind, and

snow, and resistance to salt for coastal areas and ammonia for farms. That means we offer higher long-term reliability and up to 33% increase in service life.

Our solar panels are MCS certified and meet the most stringent standards, an independent certification scheme in the United Kingdom. MCS certification is crucial for solar panels installed in the UK, as it ensures their quality, efficiency, and compliance with industry best practices.

PES: What are the benefits of glass-glass technology and how are you finding the market developing for this?

PS: Glass-glass technology is the longest-lasting and most durable solar module out there, ensuring delivery of maximum yields over its lifespan. We are seeing a huge growing demand for sustainable, premium-quality solar modules that offer enhanced durability and cell protection, greater efficiency, better temperature resistance and fire safety and reduced degradation.

At Solarwatt we continue to develop, test, and refine our glass-glass portfolio to reflect the demands of the industry. Our new generation of solar panels are guaranteed to produce a 25% higher yield compared to the industry standard. Additionally, our bifacial glass-glass panels are significantly more resistant to all mechanical and environmental influences.

Our range of solar panels is versatile and adaptable for both residential and commercial projects. Selecting the right panel for the project depends on several variables, our Panel vision style, with a black frame and transparent appearance, Panel vision black with a black frame and black appearance, and Panel vision pure with a silver frame are a popular choice amongst homeowners who are looking for a reliable, sleek and high performing solar system.

Our Panel vision pure, with a silver frame, are popular with commercial businesses of all sizes because of their longevity and quality combined with performance guarantees. Our Panel vision range is also suitable for both in and on-roof installations.

PES: Commercially, and particularly for carports, there have been lots of industry changes haven't there? How has this impacted you?

PS: Yes, we have seen an increase in applications for PV implementations in commercial infrastructure in general, for carports and facades. As electromobility rises the demand for sustainable solutions and solar carports is a natural step. Over the last decade, we have also seen these solutions become more affordable too.

This year we have launched a follow-up model to our construct panel, the Solarwatt Panel vision GM 3.0 construct, which also has an abZ from the German Institute for Building Technology (DIBt). This new half-cell module includes a middle support strut on the underside of the panel and uses bifacial cells that pay off particularly well when they are used in a free-standing roof construction such as a carport or a parking lot canopy, where there is light from both sides. The double-sided photoactive cells enable additional electricity yields of up to 10% in a carport. An elegant, robust panel that is unique to Solarwatt.

PES: As demand grows for solar and we begin to rely on it more and more for our energy, stabilising the power grid becomes increasingly important and yet challenging too, doesn't it?

PS: Yes, you are right. As the demand for solar energy grows and we increasingly rely on it for our energy needs, stabilising the power grid becomes a critical challenge, not just in the UK but in many other regions as well. In many countries grid congestion

remains a huge challenge. Integrating solar energy into existing national utility grids can be complex as solar production may not align with peak energy demand leading to imbalances. It means PV systems are not allowed to be installed and greatly hinders the progression of the energy transition which in turn, isn't good for the industry.

The solution lies in battery storage with backup functionality, frequency control, virtual power plant, etc. By creating greater efficiencies in stored solar energy usage meaning, it doesn't get fed back to the grid.

PES: What are your views around sector coupling as a solution?

PS: Sector coupling is the way forward. Solar PV and generating solar-powered electricity are only one part of the equation. To meet the entire energy demand of a household or business one must consider battery storage, heating, and mobility. To offer that as a one-stop-shop integration where all the components work together and are managed by a smart app is the holy grail.

PES: A lot has changed and developed since Solarwatt was founded, so what comes next? What is your vision for the future?

PS: Our vision for the future is to enable complete sector coupling solutions across all our international markets and be among the top five players in those countries.

We also want to continue solar manufacturing, introducing the latest technologies offering fair solar and leading the way in ESG and CSR. We also want to continue expanding operations and increasing our production capacity. We have achieved a lot over the last 30 years, but there is more work to do in powering a better tomorrow.

www.solarwatt.co.uk

