

Credendo is essential partner for green growth

ENERGYVISION

Belgium-based renewable energy company EnergyVision has taken a pioneering new approach to building renewable energy projects. It is an approach that removes financial barriers for their customers – and it has proven successful, as the company wins more and more contracts in China and Morocco, as well as within Belgium. Its long-standing partnership with Credendo has been vital in supporting the financing of projects as well as safeguarding its investments overseas.



EnergyVision is a Belgium-headquartered company with offices in Morocco and China, that is shaking up the renewable energy sector with a unique way of encouraging greater use of solar energy by small businesses and households.

The company – which was founded by just three friends and EUR 6,200 of equity in 2014 – is based on a ‘no capex’, business model. This means its customers are not required to make huge upfront payments for the installation of products such as solar panels. Rather EnergyVision makes its money by selling energy back to the customer at a guaranteed lower price per kilowatt hour than the customer’s current energy bills.

Outside of Belgium, EnergyVision works on charging customers fixed instalments, but what the customer pays is in line with what they would have paid on their energy bill.

“We take away all the worries and concerns – the technical concerns, financial concerns, and performance concerns,” says Maarten Michielssens, Group CEO and Co-founder of EnergyVision, explaining how the business model differs from that of a typical renewable energy company.

“EnergyVision’s partnership with Credendo has been instrumental, providing the financing and insurance that underpins the company’s business model,” he adds. The company makes use of Credendo’s supplier credit and forfaiting products as well as its insurance cover on foreign direct investments (FDI) in China and Morocco.

“When the company launched in 2014, appetite for financing renewables in Belgium was very low,” Michielssens explains. “We wanted to provide financial formulas for customers that did not have any resources and because we were a small business, banks were not willing or eager to provide financing. We were a new company and didn’t have much apart from a firm belief that it would work. That’s not a bankable story,” he says.



However, Credendo did see potential and decided to support EnergyVision. The cooperation has always been very successful as the two parties have a strong relationship. “Proactivity and clear communication are key in the cooperation between EnergyVision and Credendo,” says Rudi Galle, Senior Underwriter at Credendo for EnergyVision.

“I often joke that Credendo is one of our founders. But the reality is, without the solution from Credendo, we would not have grown, we would not have existed as we do today with a EUR 134 million annual turnover,” says Michielssens.

“Providing financial solutions for customers really accounts for 97 or 98% of our turnover. If we would only sell products – instead of combining them with the business model which needs credit insurance and forfaiting – we would not have exceeded EUR 5 million in turnover,” he says.

Since 2014, EnergyVision has built and operated over 12,000 energy projects, producing more than 630 million kWh of renewable energy every year.

The company expects to have passed the 300 megawatt peak (MWp) target – a unit for measuring the capacity of solar plants – for solar panel installations in China in 2022. This is the equivalent of 375 million kilowatt hour of green electricity produced per year.

In 2021, EnergyVision installed 252,500 solar panels in China – helping to reduce CO₂ emissions by such an extent it would be the equivalent of removing 73,690 cars from the roads.

In Morocco, EnergyVision currently has a share of around 20% in the solar panel and solar irrigation market. In 2021, it installed 37,000 solar panels, which is calculated to be the equivalent of removing 25,477 pollution-emitting cars.

Credendo’s FDI insurance has also been key in helping EnergyVision establish itself in China and Morocco. “If we are looking to set up new business abroad and we don’t have cover from Credendo, we don’t even start. It is the very first check we do,” Michielssens says.

The company is also one of the first to benefit from the new Credendo Green Package, launched last September – a package of financial benefits granted to projects that meet Credendo’s environmental criteria.

Benefits include longer durations on financing, larger financing amounts, and a higher proportion of the risk to be covered by Credendo – cover can go up to 98%.

“It is not so easy for renewable energy projects to have a payback time of less than five years – whether you look at solar, wind, hydrogen or batteries. These projects often end up with seven years or longer, so the fact that the Credendo Green Package allows you to extend the duration, really helps,” Michielssens says.

The steadfast – yet ever-evolving – partnership with Credendo has ensured EnergyVision could focus on its customers, rather than being distracted by the endless search for investors.

“Many start-ups are mainly focused on convincing investors to invest in their company. Until December 2021, our equity was still the equity we began with. We could focus on convincing customers. That is something that could happen thanks to Credendo,” he says.

EnergyVision did receive its first capital increase of EUR 17.5 million at the end of 2021 and a further EUR 26.5 million at the beginning of 2022.

“Yet, these recent capital injections have not altered the heart of the business,” he says. “82% of the ownership of the company is still with the founders, which means the DNA of the company is really protected. This is exceptional and partly due to the luck of having Credendo there all along.”

Looking to the future, Michielssens remarks it is about creating “more and more impact” so EnergyVision can help both people and the planet.

“That means adding extra technology to existing customers, adding extra customers and thirdly – over time – looking to expand into new regions,” he says.

The company has already added to its offering with the introduction of green charging stations for electric cars in 2021 and will be looking to gain greater market share in this sector.



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Group CEO and Co-founder of EnergyVision

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