



'Free' solar panels

A successful partnership with Zonneplan





On 5 December 2023, Vesteda CEO Gertjan van der Baan installed one of the last of the 10,521 solar panels Vesteda fitted in 2023, taking the number well past Vesteda's target of 9,600 new solar panels for last year.

In early December, Vesteda CEO Gertjan van der Baan installed one of the last of the 10,521 solar panels Vesteda fitted to its homes in 2023. This took the total number of solar panels Vesteda has installed over the past three years to almost 20,000. This means our tenants can now generate over six million kWh of energy a year. Our ambition is to now fit all remaining suitable existing Vesteda houses with solar panels by 2027. This will make a significant contribution to our ambition to cut CO₂ emissions by 95% by 2050 compared to 1990.

To meet our sustainability targets in line with the Paris Proof agreement and to reduce our tenants' housing costs, in 2020 we decided to increase the number of solar panels we were planning to install each year. Up to then, the installation of solar panels was part of our regular renovation and sustainability-related work on our existing houses. In addition to this, tenants could also submit a request to install solar panels on their property themselves. However, this approval process is very labour intensive and can easily lead to disagreements and legal issues.

Investigating options

Initially, we explored two options to meet our target. The first option was to let tenants invest in solar panels themselves through a supplier we had selected. The other option was for Vesteda to invest and ask tenants to pay a monthly fee. Following our investigation of these options, it turned out that they both had significant drawbacks, such as having to go through a complicated legal process, an uncertain acceptance rate, an unbalanced streetscape and a heavy administrative burden. This soon led to us exploring a third option: offering solar panels without a financial contribution from our tenants, which was an innovative idea. We then developed a business case for this, which led to the first pilot in Amsterdam in 2021.

Targets achieved

In 2022, our target was to install at least 4,000 solar panels that year and in 2023 this target was 9,600 panels. To date, we've met every annual target we have set, with conversion rates consistently higher than the previous year, sometimes by as much as 100%. Of course, the energy crisis played a role in this, but the increasing confidence and enthusiasm of our tenants certainly also helped. At first, tenants found it very difficult to believe they were getting solar panels 'for free'. After all, the proceeds from the solar panels directly benefited the tenants, without them having to pay a monthly fee. The 'free solar panels project' has been a huge success for both us and our tenants. For the period 2024-2027, we are aiming to install at least 11,000 solar panels each year.

	Number of solar panels	Number of solar panels (cumulative)	Generated energy (kWh a year)	Yearly CO ₂ -savings (in tons)
2021	3.968	3.968	1.113.024	375
2022	4.739	8.707	2.612.824	881
2023	10.521	19.228	6.225.753	2.098
2024 (expected)	11.000	30.228	10.010.807	3.374

Figure 1: The number of solar panels installed and the amount of annual energy and CO₂ savings generated.