

Memorandum of Understanding

Coalition for aligning the development of offshore wind energy and grid infrastructure with nature protection and healthy marine ecosystems.

Purpose

The Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature (the Coalition) will work together to develop a collaborative approach to planning environmentally friendly development of offshore wind energy and grid infrastructure and support the elaboration and implementation of European climate, energy, and environmental protection objectives. Our joint work will contribute to the sustainable deployment of offshore wind energy and grid infrastructure while protecting the natural environment, preventing the loss of biodiversity, and safeguarding healthy ecosystems.

Background information

Only strong and resilient ecosystems can withstand the negative and widespread effects of climate change. To gain resilience and strengthen natural carbon sinks, our marine ecosystems must be protected and restored. One of the crucial measures to stabilise and mitigate climate change and prevent further acidification of the oceans is removal of fossil fuels from the entire energy sector within a timeline compatible with limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°C. This can be achieved with the help of offshore wind energy. However, offshore energy deployment must be balanced with the strengthening of ecosystems and aligned with all spatial uses of the sea (e.g. fishing, shipping, energy generation, military uses) and with climate, nature protection and restoration goals.

Offshore wind energy production must be planned collaboratively, with a long-term perspective and should take into account the cumulative effects of human activities at sea on a regional/basin/sub-basin scale.

We need clear milestones set for 2030, 2040, and 2050 and Maritime Spatial Plans that go beyond their current six-year cycle. We must consider the entire sea basin not just as a physical space that is divided up for different purposes, but as an ecosystem that must be restored to and maintained in good health, thus taking into consideration habitats, species, and the interactions between them, as well as future impacts of changes in the marine environment due to climate change and human use. This includes grid connections, landing points, and their impacts on coastal and onshore environments. Offshore wind development will need to be connected to the grid in smart, efficient, and environmentally friendly ways to meet higher European renewables targets and pave the way for realising more ambitious targets. All offshore energy and grid deployment must also be implemented in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy to first avoid and minimise, then restore and, if necessary, offset biodiversity impacts.

Aim of the Coalition

This Coalition aims to support a comprehensive and collaborative planning approach for offshore wind energy and grid development to align environmental protection and restoration targets with global climate goals.

The Coalition brings together NGOs, wind industry, and grid developers. The Coalition further engages with suppliers, academia (universities and research institutes), the European Commission (in particular DG MARE, DG ENER and DG ENV), and other relevant national, European and international bodies.

The Renewables Grid Initiative (RGI) acts as convener and moderator of the Coalition.

Participation in the Coalition is subject to the voluntary, active, regular, and constructive participation of each Member.

By signing this MoU, Members agree to develop, regularly update, and follow the Rules of Procedure.

Members commit to work actively in defining and agreeing on a Work Plan which will be updated on a yearly basis. Members will also contribute actively to the realisation and implementation of the Work Plan depending on their capacity and abilities.

The Coalition will provide an open forum for discussion, where relevant information and experiences are assessed and collated, needs for further research are identified and suggestions are made on how to improve planning and deployment of offshore wind and grid infrastructure in the European seas.

This document is complemented by the Rules of Procedure where the structure and cooperation principles of the Coalition are defined and by a Work Plan which is updated on a yearly basis and spells out the concrete activities to be undertaken by the Members of the Coalition.

Parties to this Memorandum

