

Press release:

Launch of OCEaN Statement on ecological criteria in offshore wind farm auctions

26 April 2023, Copenhagen

The [Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature \(OCEaN\)](#) is launching a statement today encouraging all European Member States to make full use of ecological non-price criteria for the design of offshore wind farm auctions. The launch is part of a workshop at [WindEurope](#)'s Annual Event in Copenhagen, which OCEaN jointly organised with [WindEurope](#) and the [Renewables Grid Initiative \(RGI\)](#).

The workshop '[How to integrate nature into offshore wind and grid infrastructure – a spotlight on offshore auctioning](#)' will serve as a valuable opportunity to discuss ambitions and concrete examples of reconciliation between energy infrastructure and nature and dive deeper into ecological non-price criteria for offshore wind farm auctions by bringing together the perspectives of EU Members States, wind developers, transmission system operators, and NGOs.

Voices in support of the statement:

Antonella Battaglini, CEO of RGI, believes that it is both possible and needed to align offshore wind infrastructure with nature protection, saying: "Ecological non-price criteria in offshore wind farm auctions is a key opportunity to speed up renewable energy deployment, address the biodiversity crisis, fight climate change, and sustain European industries. Non-price ecological criteria should be applied to all auctioning, implemented transparently, and monitored against agreed standards. The collaborative work within OCEaN is instrumental in achieving this."

Giles Dickson, CEO of WindEurope, adds: "The EU now wants Governments to have non-price criteria in auctions. Ecological criteria are a good thing. They reward companies for the investments they've already made in biodiversity protection and that they want to make. And they incentivise innovation in biodiversity protection which is good for the environment. They show renewables and biodiversity protection go hand in hand. The Netherlands has started using them and many other countries are considering doing the same. Good. This is win-win."

Ewout van Galen, Head of Programmes, The North Sea Foundation: "The rapid expansion of offshore wind energy takes place in a degraded North Sea ecosystem. We cannot manage nature, but we can manage human activities. It is therefore essential that nature is part and parcel of the offshore energy transition, so that there is ecological space for our national offshore energy goals and those of neighbouring countries. It is of vital importance that we set the ecological bar high, by urging all member states to make non-price criteria for biodiversity and sustainability a core part of offshore wind farm auctions. This contributes to the necessary nature restoration and helps the wind energy industry to truly become a nature positive industry by 2030."

You can read OCEaN's full statement below.

OCEaN Statement on ecological criteria in offshore wind farm auctions

The Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature (OCEaN) encourages European Member States to make full use of ecological non-price criteria for the design of offshore wind farm auctions. These are important tools for Member States to incentivise the innovation required to achieve the EU Green Deal objectives and the Good Environmental Status of our seas, support European industry, and speed up the deployment of much-needed electricity generation and transport capacity.

Today, Europe has 30 GW of offshore capacity and Member States have set targets for more than 150 GW of offshore wind by 2030. The European Commission foresees 300 GW of offshore wind by 2050 in the EU. Including the UK and Norway, the ambitions reach 450 GW. This means that Europe will need fifteen times the current offshore capacity to reach these targets and achieve climate neutrality.

The expansion of offshore wind energy needed to meet our climate goals and enhance our energy security must go hand in hand with nature protection. European Member States must address the climate and biodiversity crises together through environmentally-sound solutions for deploying offshore wind energy and subsea electricity grids.

Among available solutions, **the adequate design of competitive bidding processes for offshore wind is of utmost importance to sustain wind energy's development in Europe, maintain the competitiveness of European industries, and ensure that projects are implemented with the best possible sustainable and ecological standards.** The most recent EU State Aid Guidelines, which entered into force in January 2022, allow national auctions to move beyond a price-only approach and integrate other non-monetary factors in the selection process. The proposed Net Zero Industry Act would also mandate governments to make full use of these. **Non-price criteria** can cover several aspects such as sustainability, biodiversity, system integration, innovation, EU supply chain development, and benefits to communities. The Netherlands, France, and Germany are already applying various categories of non-price criteria in their auctions for offshore wind. Many other countries are also considering introducing them.

The integration of ecological criteria in offshore wind auctions is an opportunity to develop solutions which can provide benefits for nature and the climate, which is at the core of OCEaN's objectives. These criteria **are important to incentivise better environmental performance of offshore wind projects, boost innovation, minimise impacts on nature, and contribute to the enhancement of marine ecosystems.** If aligned with EU energy and environmental legislation, they can incentivise concepts of circular resource use, nature-inclusive designs, protection of vulnerable ecosystems, restoration, and knowledge sharing. When successfully applied, they can also boost coexistence with other sectors and facilitate the implementation of compensation measures. The inclusion of ecological criteria in auction design is essential to ensure large scale innovation and the development of sustainable projects.

All non-price criteria, including but not exclusive to the ecological category, should be clear, objective, comparable, easy to assess, scorable, and ideally harmonised among Member States. Due to the limited experience in tendering with non-price criteria, public authorities should seek the appropriate tender format by consulting with relevant stakeholders, employ a learning-by-doing approach, and ensure that the whole process is **transparent**.

The Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature (OCEaN) is committed to developing solutions which are beneficial for nature and the climate, but also for European economies and security of energy supply. Therefore, OCEaN Members are committed to supporting EU Member States in identifying possible ecological criteria, facilitating contact with stakeholders, and serving as a knowledge-hub of best practices and scientific evidence.

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More information on ...

...the [Renewables Grid Initiative \(RGI\)](#)

RGI is a unique collaboration of NGOs and TSOs from across Europe engaging in an 'energy transition ecosystem-of-actors'. We promote fair, transparent, sustainable grid development to enable the growth of renewables to achieve full decarbonisation in line with the Paris Agreement.

RGI Members originate from a variety of European countries, consisting of TSOs from Belgium (Elia), Croatia (HOPS), France (RTE), Germany (50Hertz, Amprion, TenneT and TransnetBW), Ireland (EirGrid), Italy (Terna), the Netherlands (TenneT), Portugal (REN), Spain (Red Eléctrica de España) and Switzerland (Swissgrid); and the NGOs Bellona Europa, BirdLife Europe, Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, Ember, France Nature Environnement (FNE), Friends of the Earth Ireland, Fundación Renovables, Germanwatch, Legambiente, NABU, Natuur&Milieu, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), WWF International and ZERO. Europacable and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) are Supporting Members.

...[WindEurope](#)

WindEurope is the voice of the wind industry, actively promoting wind energy across Europe. We have over 400 members from across the whole value chain of wind energy: wind turbine manufacturers, component suppliers, power utilities and wind farm developers, financial institutions, research institutes and national wind energy associations.

...the [Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature \(OCEaN\)](#)

OCEaN brings together NGOs, TSOs and wind industry organisations from across Europe. Together we work towards a sustainable deployment of offshore energy and grid infrastructure, while ensuring alignment with nature protection and healthy marine ecosystems.

OCEaN is funded, convened, and moderated by the Renewables Grid Initiative. Members of OCEaN are TSOs (50Hertz, Amprion, Elia, EirGrid, Energinet, National Grid Ventures, Le réseau de transport d'électricité - RTE, TenneT), NGOs (BirdLife International, Climate Action Network Europe - CAN Europe, Germanwatch, Naturschutzbund - NABU, Natuur&Milieu, the North Sea Foundation - Stichting De Noordzee, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds - RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts, the World Wide Fund for Nature - European Policy Office - WWF EPO) and wind industry organisations (Iberdrola, Ørsted, Seawind Ocean Technology, Siemens Gamesa, Vattenfall, WindEurope, Wind Energy Ireland, the German Network for Wind Energy - WAB), the German Federal Association of Offshore Wind Farm Operators BWO). Ocean Institute and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) are supporting organisations.