

# Achieving nature- and people-friendly offshore wind and grids

## *A call to address outstanding challenges*

Harnessing the immense potential of offshore wind energy will be crucial to achieving the EU's climate and energy targets for 2030, 2040, and 2050, and therefore a key tool in the fight against **climate change**. Offshore wind will significantly reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels and lower electricity prices, thereby strengthening our **energy security** while bringing **affordable energy** to European households and businesses.

In parallel, given the ongoing **biodiversity crisis**, protecting and restoring our natural ecosystems is not only a moral imperative but also an economic one, as well as being key to fight and adapt to climate change. By integrating nature protection and restoration into our energy strategies and the development of offshore wind and electricity grid infrastructure, the EU can and must ensure that our transition to renewable energy contributes to preserving natural heritage for future generations. Healthy ecosystems [provide essential services](#), such as carbon sequestration, flood protection, and food production. These services are also fundamental to mitigating the effects of climate change and providing security and resilience of our economy and society.

Against this backdrop, wind industry leaders, NGOs, and electricity grid operators from across Europe have united in the Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature ([OCEaN](#)) – North & Baltic Seas to find solutions on how to harmonise offshore wind and grid developments with nature protection and restoration. We achieve this by collecting and sharing good practices, identifying and filling research gaps, finding common ground with key stakeholders, and advocating for solutions that enable the expansion of offshore wind and grid infrastructure while upholding the highest environmental standards.

**OCEaN looks forward to working with the new European Parliament and European Commission.** The new EU mandate will be pivotal for shaping the future of the European Union and its Member States. Indeed, with the current legislative term ending in 2029, the decisions made in the next five years will be catalytic in defining the EU's pathway to achieve climate, energy and biodiversity objectives hand in hand.

**A great deal of work lies ahead. A comprehensive package of policies will need to be implemented at the Member State level and will require further guidance from the European Commission to achieve our ambitious targets for offshore wind and biodiversity.**

In order to achieve this, OCEaN asks for the effective implementation of the following policy files:

- **The Maritime Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD).** In line with the recently published [Mission Letter](#) to the Fisheries and Oceans Commissioner-designate, it is important to strengthen Maritime Spatial Planning to both optimise the use of our seas and

keep them healthy and resilient. In this regard, we encourage Member States to review their current maritime spatial plans to better integrate the requirements of the Renewable Energy Directive and environmental legislation, aiming to reduce the overall pressure of human activities on nature through an ecosystem-based approach, as outlined by the MSPD. To limit cumulative impacts, we urge the European Commission and Member States to strengthen transboundary and sea basin cooperation, promote good practices for the siting of all activities - including offshore wind and grids areas and their co-location with other uses. Additionally, further promotion of data sharing and collection is essential. The participation of stakeholders in maritime spatial planning processes is key to avoiding delays later.

- **The Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy (ORES) and the Net Zero Industry Act (NZIA).** Achieving the 300 GW target by 2050 requires certainty on targets, spatial allocation, improved permitting processes (e.g., one-stop shop and national authorities sufficiently staffed), increasing investment in electricity grid infrastructure, supply chains, and research and innovation. We encourage Member States to make use of ecological and social non-price criteria for the design of offshore wind farm auctions, in line with the recent European Commission's guidance on auction design for renewable energy. This will boost competitiveness of EU industry while providing value for society and nature, among others.
- **The Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, EU Nature Restoration Law and Birds and Habitats Directives.** By 2030, the EU must achieve the protection of 30% of Europe's seas, of which 10% is strictly protected, along with the implementation of the newly passed EU Nature Restoration Law, which foresees the restoration of 20% of Europe's seas. OCEaN believes that speeding up the deployment of wind and grid infrastructure is possible by pursuing further existing examples of sustainable planning and implementation of projects, ensuring adequate resourcing in public authorities, allocating sufficient funding for conservation and restoration and instigating coordinated actions among different policy areas, Member States and stakeholders.

Policy integration at both EU and national level is needed to efficiently address both the urgency to deploy renewables and biodiversity targets. Upcoming initiatives, such as the announced **EU Oceans Pact**, should adopt a holistic approach and serve as a tool to ensure coherence across all policies, sectors and economic activities linked to EU seas.

In order to successfully deliver on this, OCEaN Members call for **increased regional cooperation**, which include all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, and therefore, the strengthening of sea-basin fora (e.g., OSPAR, HELCOM, NSEC, GNSBI, etc).

*OCEaN – North & Baltic Seas is committed to supporting the European Parliament and Commission and Member States in the achievement of these critical objectives. We remain available to offer our expertise and collaboration to develop policies and initiatives and share practices that align offshore wind and grid development with environmental stewardship. By working together, we can achieve a cleaner, more secure, and competitive Europe that leads global efforts to net-zero and inspires the world with both renewable energy, and nature conservation and restoration.*