

# Non-Price Criteria in Offshore Wind Energy Tenders

Med OCEaN Joint Statement

September 2025

**T**he undersigned Members of the Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature in the Mediterranean and adjacent Atlantic waters (Med OCEaN) invite EU Member States to consider integrating ecological non-price criteria in the design of offshore wind tenders. This will ensure the successful deployment of offshore wind infrastructure and the achievement of renewable energy targets under strong environmental safeguards.

The Mediterranean region is particularly vulnerable to climate change and has a strong dependence on imported fossil fuels, which underlines the urgent need to shift to low-carbon energy sources. This includes the development of offshore wind and grid infrastructure. To date, France has an installed capacity of 1.5 GW and Spain, Portugal, and Italy only have small pilot projects. These four countries together are expected to tender at least 11 GW of offshore wind projects by 2030<sup>1</sup> and to achieve these targets, well-designed offshore wind auctions with suitable requirements and clear timelines will be crucial.

The **Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA)**, through its '[Implementing Act on non-price criteria for renewable energy auctions](#)', requires Member States to apply non-price criteria in at least 30% of their annual renewable energy tender volumes or alternatively 6 GW per year – including offshore wind. Based on this Implementing Act, non-price criteria can be integrated as pre-qualification, award criteria, or both. This allows Member States to consider non-financial aspects when assessing the viability of projects and boost innovation in various areas, such as the project's contribution to **resilience, sustainability, biodiversity, responsible business conduct, and its ability to deliver projects fully and on time**.

Within the scope of the Implementing Act, the integration of biodiversity criteria will reward projects that go **beyond legal requirements** of standard Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) to **minimise environmental impacts**, and/or **pursue nature conservation and restoration measures** (onsite or offsite).<sup>2</sup> Projects making use of these tools are more likely to compensate for impacts on biodiversity and contribute to the enhancement of ecosystems. This can lead to increased public acceptance which can reduce the risk of cancellations and delays.

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<sup>1</sup> Directorate-General for Energy (Dec 2024), [MS agree new ambition for expanding offshore renewable energy](#).

<sup>2</sup> A robust Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) process is a necessary preliminary step, essential for identifying areas of lower environmental sensitivity suitable for offshore wind infrastructure, while also helping to reconcile the often-conflicting interests of various marine users. See [Med OCEaN recommendations on MSP](#).



Offshore wind tenders are well-suited to include both non-price pre-qualification and award criteria, as these tools have already been applied in several European markets (such as the Netherlands, Germany, and France).

While pre-qualification criteria should apply to all auctions, award criteria are most effective in a centralised tendering system. In the latter, **governments** select sites by conducting preliminary investigations to varying extents, enabling the use of tailored criteria based on specific needs (e.g., ecological considerations, grid requirements).

In contrast, in open-door tenders, where **developers** select the sites, the application of non-price criteria may be less appropriate, as governments have not assessed the specific needs and environmental sensitivities of the proposed sites (such as in Italy).

When it comes to the Mediterranean and adjacent Atlantic waters, floating offshore wind auctions will predominantly employ a Contract for Difference (CfD) scheme. Under CfD schemes, non-price criteria are limited to 30% of the total evaluation of the proposed project.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, incorporating non-price criteria can add complexity to auction procedures and, consequently, may lead to increased project costs borne by consumers. These challenges must be carefully managed through adequate auction design. In emerging offshore wind energy markets, where non-price criteria will not be considered in initial auctions, they can still be applied in subsequent tendering rounds.

As Member States in the Mediterranean and adjacent Atlantic waters continue to develop offshore wind tenders and revise existing frameworks, it is important that national authorities are prepared to adhere to the requirements of the Implementing Act and ensure the sustainable development of offshore wind projects.

In this context, the Med OCEaN signatories recommend that national authorities adopt the **maximum allowable weight for non-price criteria in offshore auctions under CfD** (30% of the proposal's overall evaluation). These criteria should prioritise environmental factors and align with national priorities and challenges. If successfully integrated, national authorities should then:

1. Ensure non-price criteria play a key role in offshore wind tenders, while keeping procedural complexity to a minimum.
2. Ensure that all non-price criteria commitments proposed in bids are supported by meaningful **documentation**, demonstrating they are realistic and will be fulfilled.
3. Appoint an **independent evaluation panel** or a dedicated body with relevant expertise to assess the quality and viability of the non-price criteria used in project proposals. The process must be **transparent, non-discriminatory**, and **avoid delays**.
4. Ensure that all non-price criteria are clear, objective, measurable, easy to assess, and strategically aligned with both climate change

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission (January 2022), [EU State Aid Guidelines for Climate, Energy, and Environment](#).



mitigation and ecosystem priorities to deliver effective environmental benefits in accordance with EU legislation.

5. Establish a robust and transparent **monitoring system** to track both positive and negative biodiversity impacts throughout the entire project lifecycle. **Adaptive management measures** should be implemented as needed, in line with EU legislation (see Implementing Act – Article 10).

Additionally, even if the Implementing Act does not specifically require social non-price criteria, developers should strive to promote and highlight the **positive socio-economic impacts** of their projects, as these can enhance public acceptance and reduce the risk of delays and cancellations. These impacts may include ensuring a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, while creating opportunities for coastal communities, such as employing local workers with social and professional difficulties, providing vocational training and internships, and enabling community ownership or participation in bids. Likewise, the socio-economic impacts should be carefully monitored throughout the entire project lifecycle to evaluate their effectiveness at the local, national, and regional levels.

To ensure that these criteria are implemented in a harmonised manner across the region, and fully compliant with EU legislation, **Med OCEaN signatories** are committed to supporting Member States in the Mediterranean and adjacent Atlantic waters in **identifying possible criteria, facilitating contact with stakeholders**, and serving as a **knowledge hub of best practices** and **scientific evidence**.

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**Med OCEaN** is a Coalition which brings together non-governmental organisations (NGOs), wind industry actors, and transmission system operators (TSOs) from the Mediterranean region and adjacent Atlantic waters. The aim of the Coalition is to promote the sustainable development of offshore wind energy while minimising its impact on biodiversity and prioritising the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems.

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## Signatories

