

Delivering offshore electricity to the EU: spatial planning of offshore renewable energies and electricity grid infrastructures in an integrated EU maritime policy

SEANERGY 2020

Main conclusions of the Final Workshop

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1. General information

The objective of the SEANERGY 2020 project was to formulate and to promote concrete policy recommendations on how to best deal with and remove maritime spatial planning (MSP) policy obstacles to the deployment of offshore renewable power generation. The project focused on offshore renewable energy technologies and related grid infrastructure in order to provide policy recommendations on how to promote a more integrated and coordinated approach to maritime spatial planning to support and facilitate the implementation of the 20% Renewables Directive.

The project was targeted towards regional and national authorities, EU decision-makers, planners, regulators, transmission system operators and marine renewable energy project developers. It took into account the specifics of four European sea basins, the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Atlantic coast and the Mediterranean Sea.

2. Objectives of the final workshop

The aim of the workshop was to present the main findings and policy recommendations of the SEANERGY 2020 project, included in the final publication of the project. The event was also the occasion for a panel debate with different stakeholders to discuss the project's recommendations for promoting more integrated and coordinated Maritime Spatial Planning policies at EU level.

3. Target audience

The workshop was targeted not only to MSP authorities at all levels, planners, regulators, TSOs, renewable energy project developers and utilities but also to groups with an interest in MSP: shipping and maritime transport organisations, fishing associations, environmental NGOs, researchers and other stakeholders.

4. Workshop setup

The workshop programme featured plenary and a panel debate session for a fruitful and open interaction with the different stakeholders.

The workshop started with a plenary session where the Dorina Iuga from EWEA introduced the rationale and the structure of the SEANERGY 2020 project.

Lachlan Cameron from ECN, the Netherlands presented the final results and recommendations of the project.

Mr. Staffan Ekwall, Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG MARE, Unit 'Maritime Policy Baltic and North Sea', presented the current work undertaken by DG MARE within the framework of maritime spatial planning.

Annemie Vermeylen from C-Power, Belgium, gave a presentation on how maritime spatial planning supported offshore renewables development (particularly wind) in Belgium.

The second part of the workshop was a panel debate on the way forward for maritime spatial planning, challenges and possible developments.

Jacopo Moccia, EWEA and Karina Veum, ECN moderated the debate. The panellists were selected amongst the main stakeholders involved in the process of maritime spatial planning. They included representatives of the fishery sector, environmental NGOs, national governments, wave and tidal sector, offshore wind developers, representative from the EU commission.

The debate focused on the role of renewables in the deployment of MSP, cross-border cooperation, the role of the European Commission to encourage MSP at EU level to reinforce the development of MSP. Moreover, the debate addressed the issue of co-existence of sea users.

5. Main messages

The final project report put together the main results of the analysis of the deployment of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) over 17 countries around 4 sea basins (North Sea, Baltic Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and Atlantic Ocean) and on the international instruments which have an impact on MSP.

With the development of offshore renewable energies technologies and the renewables binding targets set up by the European Commission to be reached by 2020, offshore activities are now competing with the sea users for their share of space in the sea.

Offshore renewable energies (offshore wind, wave and tidal) are a new comer, now competing for space with other traditional sectors, such as fishery, shipping, military, environmental protection. Offshore wind is the most developed technology within the offshore renewable ones and thus currently more concerned by the management of sea space and the share of space available. Although wave and tidal to date have not progressed as far as the full-scale deployment, they will definitely reach the same issue in the coming years.

In particular, the need for transnational MSP was highlighted. This should lead to minimise spatial conflicts, improved decision making process, lower transaction costs, and the development of cross-border infrastructure (i.e. offshore/onshore grid). Up to now, however, several issues prevented the development of cross-border cooperation on MSP.

All panellists agreed on the fact that a common framework on Europe seas basins' planning is currently lacking and something needed to be done about planning the use of Europe's seas.

This results in every country following its own rules and guidelines, which turns into conflicts with neighbours countries for actions which should instead benefit from cross-border cooperation.

The SEANERGY report and project suggests that maritime spatial planning is tackled at EU level and is calling on the European Commission for a Directive which will push coastal member states to put into place a maritime spatial planning. The Directive should leave up to each Member State to decide in which way this should be done.

Ideally the directive should focus on two main aspects:

- Advising Member states to define a Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) at national level,
- Promoting cross-border cooperation.

Steffan Ekwall, from DG MARE, underlined that the European Commission (EC) will not favour one sector over another. The EC's attitude is sector neutral. Moreover, he informed that the EC is currently working on a document which should be published by the end of the year. However, it is not yet clear which legal form the document will have (i.e. directive, guidelines, etc.).

Furthermore, the Commission advised all stakeholders and especially national governments not to wait for the EU to start working on MSP, but to be proactive and try to find synergies between the different users of the sea. "We think they (varying sea sectors) can coexist and can actually benefit from each other. It's about bringing together priorities," Ekwall said.

As highlighted by the project, panellists agreed on the need of regional cooperation to strengthen the deployment of offshore renewables and to better coordinate with all other sea's users. All stakeholders agreed that they should be involved in the planning from the very beginning in order to avoid possible conflicts. Moreover, it is necessary to spread the consultation also with stakeholders in the neighbour countries who are using the same sea space.

In order to reinforce international collaboration, it is first necessary that Member States have put into place a national MSP, and it would be better to have a common framework concerning permitting procedures. This will incentivize investors from the offshore renewable sector. It will also help developing the sector in order to reach the 2020 targets. As underlined by developers, the actual legal uncertainty and the different legal framework from one state to the other make investors more reluctant to invest in the offshore renewable sector. The existing regional working group such as NSCOGI should act as starting point to build regional cooperation within the different sea basins. They can act as point of contact for the different stakeholders.