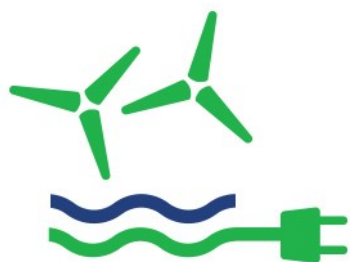


**Joint Statement on the deliverables of the energy cooperation between the North
Seas Countries**



**North Seas Energy
Cooperation**

In June 2016 France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, UK, Sweden, Norway and Denmark signed a Political Declaration for regional cooperation on offshore wind energy in the North Seas. Since then considerable results have been achieved. Governments have directed significant resources to the implementation of the Political Declaration and are taking forward the actions as identified through a series of Support Group meetings with experts. Throughout the process the Support Groups have engaged with industry stakeholders in a constructive and open manner.

Ministers and the European Commission agree in Esbjerg on the 20th of June 2019 to:

- Acknowledge that the prospects for offshore wind development have significantly improved since the signing of the '*Political Declaration on energy cooperation between the North Seas Countries*' on the 6th of June 2016, as costs for offshore windfarms have dropped more rapidly than anticipated and the need for regional or international cooperation may come sooner than expected.
- Recognize the important role offshore wind plays in meeting the Paris Agreement and EU policy objectives of climate neutrality as outlined in the EU Member States' recent National Energy and Climate Plans.
- Acknowledge the progress and deliverables made by the four Support Groups of the North Seas Energy Cooperation, reaffirm the objective of the North Seas Energy Cooperation on the promotion of offshore wind, and call for taking the work forward that has been carried out so far and further develop this within the framework of the cooperation.
- Acknowledge that the experiences and deliverables from the North Seas Energy Cooperation are of universal interest and the solutions and results can be replicated in other contexts.

Results of the first three years of the North Seas Energy Cooperation

- Ministers and the European Commission recognize that the enhanced collaboration and the knowledge shared between the authorities and stakeholders involved in the Cooperation have proven fruitful and have contributed to the work on improving the framework conditions of offshore wind in the North Seas.
- Ministers and the European Commission welcome the progress made and acknowledge the value of the results achieved in the extensive and diverse work streams identified for the first phase of the Cooperation covering the period July 2016 to June 2019.

Maritime Spatial Planning and Environmental Assessment

In order to reach our energy and climate targets, there is a need to better understand the possible ecological limits of large scale wind development in the North Seas. Within the framework of the maritime spatial planning¹, the accumulation of environmental impacts has been researched. Further work is needed on maritime spatial planning and environmental assessment to be able to utilise the potential of the North Seas. Therefore, Ministers and the European Commission:

¹ tSG1 and the project SEANSE

- Recognize the possible ecological limits of large scale wind development at sea and acknowledge the necessity of increasing knowledge in the field of maritime spatial planning, environmental research and cumulative impact assessment of wind farms.
- Reaffirm to continue to work towards a common environmental impact assessment methodology, which requires an integrated approach and close cooperation between responsible authorities for energy, maritime spatial planning and environment.

Offshore Grids and other Offshore Infrastructure

The research conducted in the first three years of the North Seas Energy Cooperation shows that regional coordination in the development of hybrid projects linking offshore windfarms with interconnectors could provide cost reductions, compared to isolated developments. More specific analysis in the North Seas Energy Cooperation have identified four specific geographical areas so-called clusters:

- German Bight
- Mid-North Sea (area close to the Dogger Bank)
- BE-NL-UK
- Ireland-UK

The objective of cost reduction could be achieved in forms of hybrid projects in these our clusters. Analysis conducted within the North Seas Energy Cooperation have so far identified five concrete hybrid projects:

- Two NL-UK projects (IJmuiden Ver OWF to UK and Combined Grid Solution IJmuiden Ver-Norfolk UK)
- COBRA cable
- DE OWF connected to NL
- North Seas Wind Power Hub (Dogger Bank)

As a part of the North Seas Energy Cooperation legal, regulatory and commercial barriers for developing these concrete hybrid projects have been identified and actions plan to address these barriers have been drawn up. On this basis, Ministers and the European Commission:

- Recognize the potential of clusters and hybrid projects to utilise the offshore wind capacity of the North Seas.
- Welcome the action plans for the identified hybrid projects which can be further developed and matured at both national and regional level.
- Recognize the North Seas Energy Cooperation as a forum to reflect on how to deal with the uncertainties about the regulatory treatment of hybrid projects at EU and national level and as forum to discuss options for addressing these issues. One specific issue is how to tackle future offshore hybrid projects under the new EU electricity regulation and what lessons can be learned from existing projects.
- Recognize the possibilities for synergies with conventional offshore infrastructure, which could deliver reductions in costs and make contributions to the decarbonisation of the energy system and support work on this issue within the North Seas Energy Cooperation.

Support Framework and Finance of Offshore Wind Projects

Offering the offshore wind sector long-term prospects is vital in order to facilitate long-term investments and further cost reductions. An overview of the planned installed offshore wind capacity pipeline of EU Member States of the North Seas Energy Cooperation shows political commitment for an indicative aggregate capacity of at least 70 GW in 2030². In order to reflect the dynamics of offshore wind deployment in the region, this aggregate number for 2030 could be translated into an overall trajectory of the region from 2020 to 2030.

The North Seas Energy Cooperation has established a coordination group on timing of tenders. This is important in order to avoid unfavourable bottlenecks of tenders for ensuring as cost-efficient results as possible. As a next step the North Seas Energy Cooperation will further formalise the coordination and intends to make non-confidential information on times and the capacity of future tenders across the North Seas countries publically available on an online portal. This will increase the visibility of planned investments for investors. In this context, Ministers and the European Commission:

- Confirm the importance of coordination of tenders when applicable and commit to coordinate with each other, to the extent possible, on defining future tenders.
- Confirm the importance of continued coordination on national offshore deployment in the North Seas region with a view to developing an indicative aggregate offshore wind trajectory with indicative milestones based on national planning for the next decade.
- Agree to work together to achieve an indicative aggregate installed capacity of EU Member States of the North Seas Energy Cooperation of at least 70 GW by 2030³ based on their current national plans for offshore wind deployment.

The coordination group has continuously shared experiences and best practices. As regards further cost reductions in support schemes and in particular tender design for offshore wind, new developments and new challenges have arisen in the recent years. Furthermore, new financing opportunities for offshore wind projects are emerging, e.g. zero-subsidy tenders as well as grid connection regimes. With regard to joint offshore projects – another relevant aspect in relation to clusters - Ministers and the European Commission:

- Acknowledge the importance of the cooperation to identify and share best practices and options to table new challenges as regards to support scheme design for offshore wind (joint learning and possible alignment).
- Reaffirm to consider the possibility to make use when needed and as appropriate of the cooperation tools enshrined in the Renewable Directive adopted in 2018 such as joint projects and statistical transfers in waters of the North Seas in order to achieve the EU 2030 renewable energy target.
- Underline the relevance and opportunities of new financing instruments such as the future Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) as well as the European Union renewable energy financing mechanism under the Governance Regulation with the aim of supporting the development of first joint offshore projects in the North Seas.

² Aggregated planned project pipeline by EU Member States of the North Seas Energy Cooperation (including for offshore areas other than the North Seas). Source: Member States.

³ Norway does not have any numerical targets for offshore wind deployment.

Harmonisation of rules, regulation and technical standards

Aligning rules, regulation and technical standards holds great potential for contributing to cost reduction for the offshore industry and thus the establishment of offshore wind farms in the North Seas. Today the existing rules, regulation and standards differ to a certain extent among the North Seas countries. This is for example the case in the following areas in which analyses have been carried out by the support group:

- Aviation, markings and lights,
- Health and safety,
- Certification of regulatory requirements,
- Park layout and site investigation,
- A joint approach to innovation

The analyses conducted show potential for moving forward to align, mutual recognize and optimize where possible rules, regulation and standards in order to reduce the costs of offshore wind. Ministers and the European Commission:

- Recognize the work conducted by the support group and the results achieved so far and acknowledge as well the useful network that has been created among the North Seas countries' national authorities to exchange best practices on various topics.
- Call for continued cooperation within this network on harmonising rules, regulation and technical standards.
- Therefore recommit to deliver the necessary resources and expertise to work in close cooperation as well as involving responsible national authorities with the aim of implementing the recommendations and to further work on reducing unnecessary regulation and thereby costs for the industry in the above listed areas.

The cooperation as a forum of regional coordination of the National Energy and Climate Plans

The EU Member States in the North Seas Energy Cooperation is working on ensuring a timely consultation and regional cooperation of the North Seas related elements in the National Energy and Climate Plans that all EU-countries are to submit to the European Commission by 31 December 2019 according to the Governance Regulation.

The cooperating countries are preparing a common chapter on the cooperation of offshore wind within the North Seas Energy Cooperation to be included in the National Energy and Climate Plans of the North Seas countries. The EU Ministers:

- Commit to work closely on the regional coordination and consultation of the National Energy and Climate Plans and confirm the objective of preparing a joint chapter within the North Seas Energy Cooperation
- Recognize the North Seas Energy Cooperation as a forum for exploiting the potential that the North Seas has to offer in order for the EU and Member States to reach the energy and climate targets.

Future potential of the North Seas Energy Cooperation

In order to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, we need to aim for an energy system based on energy from renewable sources, including from offshore wind. The North Seas holds a great potential for delivering large amounts of the required renewable energy and Ministers and the European Commission therefore:

- Acknowledge the need to continue a common focus on deploying large amounts of offshore wind and keep investing in the North Seas, including use of appropriate EU financing mechanisms, to reach its full potential of becoming a Silicon Valley of offshore wind and become the place for developing new and cost-efficient solutions.

The North Seas Energy Cooperation has proved useful in several ways and much progress has been made since the start of the cooperation in 2016, but there are still a number of areas where continued cooperation will bring further concrete results. Furthermore, more areas will be relevant to address in a continued cooperation, which is why prolonging the cooperation is a priority. Ministers and the European Commission therefore:

- Ask the Danish Presidency to start preparations on a new work programme for future cooperation in close collaboration with the other North Seas Member States, the Commission and Industry stakeholders.
- Recognize the importance of maintaining an open dialogue with all stakeholders, especially the industry, when preparing a new work programme and acknowledge the role of the industry in exploring the potential of the North Seas and the window of opportunities this offers for the industry; therefore welcomes the recommendations delivered by the industry as a valuable input for future key headlines for the next phase of the North Seas Energy Cooperation.
- Will meet by the end of 2019 to further discuss the potential of the North Seas Energy Cooperation and decide on the prolongation of the cooperation.
- Recall that the future work in the North Seas Energy Cooperation should be in line with relevant EU legislation as well as with existing obligations under international law.

Nature of the Joint Statement

This document does not create any rights or obligations under national or international law and does not intend to replace or modify any existing legal obligations, nor is it meant to prejudge in any way an outcome of discussions on the governance system for the Energy Union. The contents of this document remain within the framework of the 2016 Political Declaration for regional cooperation on offshore wind energy in the North Seas and the 2016-2019 Action Plan annexed to it.