

MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING



EAPO Newsletter on important Maritime Spatial Planning reports



Offshore Renewal Energy in the EU - Ambitious plan for growth but sustainability remains a challenge

European Court of Auditors



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The European Court of Auditor' report highlights that the EU has successfully contributed to the development of ORE across the EU. The adoption of several pieces of legislation either to set targets in terms of energy production capacity or to support their development through maritime planning was key. EU funding has also played a pivotal role by adding to existing private funds. The report also highlights that the targets are ambitious and that meeting them will require additional efforts by the MS to streamline a few processes. Moreover, only bottom fixed windfarms are commercially ready and have been installed.

Maritime Spatial Planning has eased the development of ORE but has not resolved the conflicts of use. Despite the need to develop co-use, very few ORE allow other activities to take place in the farms. Apart from the job creations linked to the development of ORE, very few studies have been carried out to assess the wider socioeconomic impacts both on the ORE sector and on other sectors. For fisheries, the conflict is linked to spatial exclusion. For safety concerns, fishing vessels are only allowed to enter ORE areas under certain conditions. The issues related to insurance concerns and fishing activities being allowed in the premises of the park are not addressed in the report.

When it comes to environmental impacts, the report is scarce. It highlights the need to consider cumulative impacts and lists a series of positive and negative impacts of ORE on the marine environment:

| Negative impacts | Positive impacts |
|---|---|
| Collision with ORE installations or maintenance vessels for birds | Habitats recovery due to reduction or exclusion of human activities |
| Water quality changes due to release of contaminants | Reef effect |
| Displacement effect due to underwater noise and offshore windfarms structures | |
| Habitat loss or degradation | |
| Changes in migration patterns due to changes in the electromagnetic field | |

The report then lists a series of recommendations to boost the development of ORE and to address the challenges raised by their development. They suggest breaking down ORE development targets by technology type (Floating solar, wave energy, tidal energy, floating wind...) and to promote ORE cooperation at a sea basin level. The challenges that need to be addressed are the lack of social impact assessment of ORE on itself and other sectors such as fisheries, to build on the regulation on critical raw materials to ensure it does not slow down the implementation and to address the cumulative environmental impacts of ORE on ecosystems and biodiversity.

Commission Reply to the ECA's Report



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On the first recommendation to boost the development of ORE, the commission has accepted them and has addressed them through the recently published action plan on wind energy. They will be easing the permitting process and set up sea basin level groups for technological discussions.

The reply from the Commission does not address the lack of consultation and consideration for the fishing sector that was highlighted by the report: “in particular, the unresolved conflict with fisheries in some countries will have to be better addressed”.

On the second recommendation to better address the challenges raised by ORE development, the Commission accepts it and will better assess the evolving job creation potential, employment trends and skill requirements in offshore renewable energy. The Commission will also build on the regulation on critical raw materials to secure a sustainable supply of critical raw materials. For the estimated impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity, the Commission will support Member States to enhance knowledge through research and funding.

Commission Action Plan for wind energy



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The Commission's Action Plan for wind energy vows to address some of the shortcomings identified by the ECA report.

- The Commission will launch the “Accele-RES” putting more focus on digitalisation of permitting processes and providing technical assistance to Member States. Member states are encouraged to give better visibility through wind pledges, transparent auction schedules and long-term planning.
- Improve auction design by supporting Member States in developing well designed and objective criteria to auctions.
- Improve industry engagement and Member States commitments through the co building an EU wind Charter to ensure the Wind industry remains competitive.

- The Commission will facilitate the access to EU financing through the Innovation Fund, and the European Investment Bank will make de-risking guarantees available. The use of the Temporary State aid Crisis and Transition Framework will be encouraged to support wind manufacturing in the EU.
- The Commission vows to closely monitor unfair trade practices and to use trade agreements to facilitate access to foreign markets.
- Develop skills through the creation of European net zero industry skills academies designed by Member States.

PECH workshop on EU green deal: Marine biodiversity aspects



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PECH committee requested a series of studies on the EU Green Deal to better understand the implications for fishing: Workshop on the European Green Deal – Challenges and opportunities for EU fisheries and aquaculture. Three documents were published: [Decarbonization & circular economy aspects for fisheries](#), [Marine biodiversity aspects](#) and [Food security aspects](#).

Key aspects from the workshop are about the impacts of ORE on ecosystems, the importance of multiuse and the fact that Bottom contacting OWF cannot be installed in waters deeper than 50 meters.

Their study highlights that windfarm installations are incompatible with conservation objectives and that work needs to be done to make Fishing and ORE multiuse the new standard. The incompatibility between ORE and marine conservation is because the reef effect that was brought forward initially will increase biomass of nonnative species. ORE alter the local ecosystems, their structure and functioning and fail to maintain conservation of initial ecosystems.

The study suggests 9 management recommendations to remove barriers and enhance barriers for the multi-use combination of fisheries and offshore windfarms. One of those recommendations is to fund the insurance policies that would allow fishers to fish in windfarm parks. This could be done through Green Finance funds.

| Type of intervention | Management recommendations |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Policy framework improvements | 1) Undertake multi-use opportunity mapping; encourage overlap between the two industries and demonstrate the potential benefits of co-existence. 2) Provide financial incentives for the multi-use combination (e.g. via state subsidy contracts). 3) Encourage innovation by reducing the scope of full-scale assessments for small-scale multi-use pilots. |
| Regulatory framework improvements | 4) Further improvements in assessment methodologies as part of the environmental impact assessment and cumulative impact assessment processes. 5) Draw up a mutually agreed co-existence plan between the two industries as part of the marine licencing process. |
| Good practice guidance | 6) Develop good practice technical guidance on co-design of offshore wind farms to accommodate multiple uses, including commercial fisheries. |
| Empirical studies | 7) Fund and/or encourage in situ gear trials and Research and Development projects (R&D). |
| Consultation and capacity building | 8) Reinforce and formalise direct stakeholder dialogue to exchange best available information and technology on all aspects of the multi-use combination. 9) Increase stakeholder's knowledge and financial capacity via educational resources and community funding, respectively. |