

OCEaN Statement on ecological criteria in offshore wind farm auctions

The Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature (OCEaN) encourages European Member States to make full use of ecological non-price criteria for the design of offshore wind farm auctions. These are important tools for Member States to incentivise the innovation required to achieve the EU Green Deal objectives and the Good Environmental Status of our seas, support European industry, and speed up the deployment of much-needed electricity generation and transport capacity.

Today, Europe has 30 GW of offshore capacity and Member States have set targets for more than 150 GW of offshore wind by 2030. The European Commission foresees 300 GW of offshore wind by 2050 in the EU. Including the UK and Norway, the ambitions reach 450 GW. This means that Europe will need fifteen times the current offshore capacity to reach these targets and achieve climate neutrality.

The expansion of offshore wind energy needed to meet our climate goals and enhance our energy security must go hand in hand with nature protection. European Member States must address the climate and biodiversity crises together through environmentally-sound solutions for deploying offshore wind energy and subsea electricity grids.

Among available solutions, **the adequate design of competitive bidding processes for offshore wind is of utmost importance to sustain wind energy's development in Europe, maintain the competitiveness of European industries, and ensure that projects are implemented with the best possible sustainable and ecological standards.** The most recent EU State Aid Guidelines, which entered into force in January 2022, allow national auctions to move beyond a price-only approach and integrate other non-monetary factors in the selection process. The proposed Net Zero Industry Act would also mandate governments to make full use of these. **Non-price criteria** can cover several aspects such as sustainability, biodiversity, system integration, innovation, EU supply chain development, and benefits to communities. The Netherlands, France, and Germany are already applying various categories of non-price criteria in their auctions for offshore wind. Many other countries are also considering introducing them.

The integration of ecological criteria in offshore wind auctions is an opportunity to develop solutions which can provide benefits for nature and the climate, which is at the core of **OCEaN's** objectives. These criteria **are important to incentivise better environmental performance of offshore wind projects, boost innovation, minimise impacts on nature, and contribute to the enhancement of marine ecosystems.** If aligned with EU energy and environmental legislation, they can incentivise concepts of circular resource use, nature-inclusive designs, protection of vulnerable ecosystems, restoration, and knowledge sharing. When successfully applied, they can also boost coexistence with other sectors and facilitate the implementation of compensation measures. The inclusion of ecological criteria in auction design is essential to ensure large scale innovation and the development of sustainable projects.

All non-price criteria, including but not exclusive to the ecological category, should be clear, objective, comparable, easy to assess, scorable, and ideally harmonised among Member States. Due to the limited experience in tendering with non-price criteria, public authorities should seek the appropriate tender format by consulting with relevant stakeholders, employ a learning-by-doing approach, and ensure that the whole process is **transparent**.

The Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature (OCEaN) is committed to developing solutions which are beneficial for nature and the climate, but also for European economies and security of energy supply. Therefore, OCEaN Members are committed to supporting EU Member States in identifying possible ecological criteria, facilitating contact with stakeholders, and serving as a knowledge-hub of best practices and scientific evidence.

Signatories



supporting organisation

