

Mini-workshop: Permitting, consultation and environmental protection for offshore transmission grids

Summary of key takeaways

1. Key takeaways from the presentations and Q&As

- There are significant ambitions for the deployment of marine power grids in European marine regions. These are necessary to support the continued deployment of marine renewable energy generation sources and achieve integration targets.
- There is however, a lack of progress in furthering offshore grid (and renewables) deployment. Some challenges related to this planned deployment include:
 - The need for clearer long-term policy to support the deployment of marine power grids.
 - Spatial challenges, particularly the lack of available space, in part due to competing usages of marine zones (i.e. between fishing and shipping), compounded by the size of available space.
 - Split authority competencies can delay marine power grid projects, and additionally prevent new/innovative best practices from being tested and implemented.
- Environmental considerations are increasingly being incorporated into marine grid design, with new innovative approaches being explored by many TSOs. However, further research is needed to fully understand the potential environmental impacts (including cumulative impacts) of marine power grids, such as for EMF, noise and heat impacts.
- Experiences related to offshore grid development vary across Europe with many lessons still to be learned. First learnings include:
 - Cooperation/collaboration at an early stage is crucial amongst marine stakeholders, especially between wind and grid developers, government and cross-sectoral groups. There is a continued need for exchange on how we can progress together across Europe.
 - NGOs and environmental associations are important stakeholders and play an important role in facilitating and progressing discussions for marine power grids.
 - It's a huge benefit if project developers are familiar with a marine area when considering project development.
 - It's equally as beneficial if everyone is aware of the schedule of other project developers – this prevents surprises and overlaps and promotes cooperation and collaboration, particularly in cross-border projects.

3. Key takeaways from round table discussion on protection of marine mammals

- While data on impacts of marine grids during the construction phase exist thanks to EIA and monitoring carried out for a number of projects in Europe, this knowledge is currently not communicated in an understandable and homogenous way throughout Europe, and knowledge about cumulative impact is still extremely scarce. Methodologies in tracking of marine mammals have improved, “participative science” may improve this knowledge.
 - Sharing of marine knowledge at a European level is key to understand cumulative impact
 - **A common platform for marine knowledge** could be set up, using the example of “common currency” for birds.
 - RGI could possibly play a role in this
- There is frequently a confusion between impact of offshore wind farms and marine grids.
 - More efforts should be put into explaining the difference between impact of wind farms and grids
 - Common requirements for installation methodologies and monitoring methodologies in Europe are key
 - Offshore grids could also have positive impacts: for instance, platforms for marine mammals on offshore substations could act as resting areas
 - A common view between TSOs and NGOs would help achieving a more **proportionate approach**

4. Key takeaways from round table discussion on best practices in consultation

When undertaking consultation in the marine environment, it is important to consider the following:

- Ensure there is constant and ongoing dialogue with marine stakeholders (including authorities), which ensures transparency of processes and decisions while communicating what influence a stakeholder actually has in a consultation process. This will lead to trust building.
- Provide real and meaningful alternatives for stakeholders who are engaged in a consultation process – make it a 2-way process. This is more likely to encourage successful engagement.
- Be able to engage in local dialogue. This means being able to use language which is relevant to different stakeholders (such as fisheries), regions and cultural groups.

- Supporting and applying standardised consultation frameworks internationally should be explored.
- Lastly, it is very important to properly and formally close a consultation process.