

Offshore renewable energy strategy – ECSA position on the European Strategy

ECSA welcomes the EU “Strategy to harness the potential of offshore renewable energy for a climate neutral future”. Europe is the global leader in the production of offshore renewable energy. European shipowners play a constructive role in advancing the ocean energy source in Europe and around the world. In 2018, more than 80% of global installed offshore wind capacity was located in Europe¹ and European shipowners have developed an especially strong reputation for the construction and maintenance of offshore wind parks and related infrastructure. European shipowners welcome the development of ocean energy production, such as tidal or wave energy.

Supporting European (shipping) leadership in offshore wind

Up to 18 different types of vessels are involved during the full project life-cycle of an offshore windfarm; used for surveying sites, the installation of foundations, turbines, export and inter-array cables, transportation of personnel and equipment, operation and maintenance, and eventual site decommissioning. Each activity is specialist and requires significant expertise from vessel crew and on-shore personnel. European shipping companies have played a central role in realising many global offshore wind projects to-date. Of the 5,500 offshore turbines installed globally by mid-2019², a significant share have been installed by European shipping companies. Ensuring and supporting this leadership as the sector grows in Europe and internationally should be a priority of EU policy.

ECSA’s position on the Strategy

The Strategy aims at increasing the installed offshore wind capacity from today’s 12 GW, to at least 60 GW of offshore wind and at least 1 GW of ocean energy by 2030, with a view to reach by 2050 300 GW and 40 GW of installed capacity, respectively. The Strategy highlights six areas on which the Commission will focus its actions. Shipping is vital to the growth of the EU offshore renewable energy capacity. ECSA would like to emphasis the following additional points to help grow the potential of offshore wind renewable energy as an opportunity for Europe.

Maritime spatial planning

Achieving this increase of installed capacity should ensure fair and responsible co-existence with the many other sea users, including shipping, which this Strategy rightly recognises. The scale up of offshore energy should thus not jeopardise safety,

¹ International Energy Agency, Offshore Wind Outlook 2019 (2019)
https://webstore.iea.org/download/direct/2886?filename=offshore_wind_outlook_2019.pdf

² International Energy Agency, Offshore Wind Outlook 2019 (2019)

manoeuvrability or the competitiveness of shipping as a transport mode. It is thus essential to ensure that:

- Maritime spatial planning plans are adaptive to future trends: from new traffic flows, new shipping routes, or bigger vessels,
- Early and cross-border consultation with maritime-space stakeholders and with neighbouring Member States about planned offshore renewable energy installations,
- The licensing procedure includes a thorough navigational risk assessment before projects are approved. For example, in Germany, the energy companies exploiting an offshore field are responsible for mitigating the navigational and collision risks. The applicant has to make a risk assessment taking into account the direction flow of the maritime traffic, the number of vessels passing by the plot, the wind and current directions over a 12-months period, as well as the number of incidents in the area, the probability of a collision of a drifting vessel with a wind turbine will be calculated. The risk may be reduced by assigning standby and emergency tugs, like in the German Bight area.
- Offshore energy installations co-exist with maritime transport routes, traffic separation schemes, anchorage areas, and port development,
- There are the highest levels of safety for ships transiting near offshore renewable energy installations including sufficient coverage of vessel traffic service and the provision of Emergency Support Vessels in the vicinity.

ECSA thus supports the key actions of the Strategy and would like to be included in the planned “**dialogue on offshore renewable between public authorities, stakeholders and scientists** (2021)”.

Grid infrastructures

EU coordination is needed to improve electrical grid connectivity to foster the growth of offshore wind in Europe and its surrounding regions. Developing clear long-term targets is essential to give the energy industry, as well as its supply chain, the confidence to invest. For example, shipowners will need to invest in bigger and more specialised vessels to accommodate larger or and heavier technologies. ECSA supports the creation of a framework for the Member States to formulate a joint long-term commitment for the deployment of offshore renewable energy per sea basin up to 2050 (2021).

Investments, Research & Innovation

In these fields, the Commission will encourage Member States to include reforms and investments related to renewables deployment, including offshore, in their national recovery and resilience plans, under the ‘Power up’ flagship of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (2020-2021). It will also work with the EIB and other financial institutions to support strategic investment in offshore energy through InvestEU, including for higher risk investments that advance EU technological leadership (as of 2021). In addition, under the first work programme of Horizon Europe for 2021 and 2022, the Commission proposes to, among others, improve industrial efficiency across the value chain of offshore wind energy.

ECSCA emphasises the following additional points to help grow the potential of offshore renewable energy as an opportunity for Europe, including:

- Supporting further innovation in Europe and among European companies via coordinated R&D and EU projects on, for example, floating wind installations and the new generation of vessels which will be needed to install the new technologies ;
- Encouraging the use of energy-efficient and environmentally friendly vessels serving functions across the full project-life cycle of an offshore renewable energy installation;
- Rewarding the use of vessels that do not emit greenhouse gas;
- Emphasis on realising innovative ways to use wind energy such as the production of green hydrogen or other “power to x” technologies (with potential applications as sustainable shipping fuels);

A stronger supply and value chain across Europe

ECSCA supports the key actions of the Strategy aiming at strengthening the European value chain and would like to be included in the discussions on the development of the renewables value chain in the **dedicated working group on offshore renewable energy of the Clean Energy Industrial Forum on Renewables**.

The deployment of offshore wind will lead to an increase of local job creations and growth. In addition, this will require upskilling and reskilling of offshore personnel. ECSCA is already tasked to contribute to this via the [SkillSea](#) (“Future-proof skills for the maritime transport sector”) blueprint project. SkillSea is looking amongst other things to the skills gaps and future skills needs in the maritime shipping sector. It aims, thus, to develop a sustainable and long-term skills strategy designed for the future seafarer, that will promote mobility of workers and students and raise awareness on the sector’s attractiveness.

One of ECSCA’s members, Danish Shipping, has recently conducted a socio-economic impact study³, which highlights the employment benefits from the deployment of 1GW of offshore wind in Denmark. Approximately 14.600 Danish full time equivalents jobs and 26.000 European full time equivalents jobs would be created over the course of a wind farm's life cycle. This means that the impact of the increased wind energy production on employment at the EU level will be significant in the coming years. The planned growth of offshore wind, but also of tidal or wave energy production, in the coming years will thus help Europe recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its economy and become climate neutral.

To strengthen the EU shipping sector, ECSCA would like to highlight the following actions are needed:

- Continued EU support in ensuring European shipping companies have access to growing markets globally;
- EU support in IMO-led processes to harmonise rules applicable to vessels and personnel involved in the construction and maintenance of wind farms;

³ <https://www.danishshipping.dk/en/press/news/new-report-offshore-wind-secures-thousands-of-jobs/>

- Supporting the development of skills (training, reskilling and upskilling) and occupational safety and health across the value chain, e.g. in R&D, offshore transport, installation, operation and maintenance, to ensure that there is no labour shortage in the supply chain. IMCA's training and education initiatives are a good example of current practices.
- Sharing of best practices, notably on potential hazards at the worksite. IMCA's incident reporting scheme⁴ is a good example of existing practice.

Conclusion

The European offshore renewable energy production sector is a technological leader with significant potential to support the growth of clean energy production in Europe and around the world. The European shipping industry looks forward to playing a constructive role in this global development.

About ECSA

The European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA) was founded in 1965 and represents the national shipowners' associations of the EU, Norway and the UK. The European shipowners control 39.5% of the global commercial fleet, contribute €149 billion to the EU GDP and provide 2 million Europeans with careers both on board and ashore. ECSA promotes the interests of European shipping so that the industry can best serve European and international trade in a competitive free business environment to the benefit of shippers and consumers.

⁴ <https://www.imca-int.com/core/hsse/incident-reporting/>