



North Seas Energy Cooperation

Political Declaration on energy cooperation between the North Seas Countries and the European Commission on behalf of the Union ("The North Seas Energy Cooperation")

The ministers of Energy of the Kingdom of Belgium, the Kingdom of Denmark, the French Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the Kingdom of Norway, the Kingdom of Sweden and the European Commissioner for Energy on behalf of the Union,

Considering:

- That protecting our planet and our shared environment is our generation's defining task;
- The clear message set by the European Green Deal as Europe's hallmark and reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emission by 2050 as contribution to climate protection;
- The indispensable role offshore wind energies play in achieving our individual and common European renewable energy and climate targets, and with the aim of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emission by 2050 in the EU;
- The vast potential the North Seas holds in delivering large amounts of offshore renewable energies and the North Seas Energy Cooperation's role in facilitating cooperation between countries.

Welcoming and building on:

- The historic outcome reached in Paris in December 2015 where the world adopted the first-ever global and legally-binding climate agreement with the aim of holding global warming well below 2°C and of pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C;
- The UNESCO convention concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, as ratified by the North Seas Countries;
- The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention;
- The UNCLOS and the 2030-Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, in particular SDG7: ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, and SDG14: conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
- The EU legislative package "Clean Energy for all Europeans" regulatory framework for renewable energy and the EU electricity market and the ambition of the EU Climate Law Regulation to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030;

- The Council Conclusions of 14 December 2020 on Fostering European Cooperation in Offshore and Other Renewable Energies and its call for an enabling framework at Union level for cross-border and other relevant national renewable energy projects;
- The EU Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy to harness the potential of offshore renewable energy for a climate neutral future with its aim of reaching an installed capacity of at least 60 GW of offshore wind energy and at least 1 GW of ocean energy by 2030 as well as 300 GW of offshore wind energy and 40 GW of ocean energy by 2050, therefore addressing the need for a general enabling framework, addressing barriers and challenges common to all offshore technologies;
- The EU Energy System Integration Strategy, the Hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe, the EU bio-diversity strategy for 2030;
- The Joint Statements of Energy Ministers and the European Commission of the North Seas Energy Cooperation in 2019 and 2020;
- The progress and deliverables made by the four Support Groups and the ad-hoc working group on alignment of the North Seas Energy Cooperation.
- The identified growing need for and added value of regional collaboration in ecological knowledge development, amongst others on temporal and spatial abundance of migrating species.
- Exploring future opportunities amongst others based on scenario studies for regional cooperation in an ecosystem based marine spatial planning
- The role of regional Seas Conventions in the protection of the marine environment of the NE Atlantic Ocean (including the North Seas) and the benefits of exchange of knowledge, expertise and experiences between NSEC, OSPAR and HELCOM

Taking into account:

- The required investments in the offshore wind sector and the need to mobilise funds and further improve the investment climate;
- The need to cost-effectively integrate offshore wind energy into the existing and future energy system and consider measures to this effect;
- The potential of the offshore wind sector to provide the necessary sustainable growth and jobs and to solidify European leadership in the sector and the supply chain thereby contributing to post-corona economic recovery;
- The requirements stemming from EU and national legislation, including the EEA Agreement, and applying to offshore development;

Recognising:

- 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' National Energy and Climate Plans and their updates;
- The importance of regional energy cooperation in general and in particular the experiences and results from the North Seas Energy Cooperation which can be of interest on a European-wide basis;
- The significant added value that the European Commission has to offer to North Seas cooperation as a strong driver in substance, being an important source of knowledge, analysis and capacity together with the wide expertise and practical experience coming from NSEC member countries, thereby stimulating the cooperation process;

- The need for a concrete work programme for cooperation on a voluntary basis that builds on shared political will at regional and/or sub-regional level, that is flexible, and whose progress should be evaluated periodically to facilitate focused, cost-effective and efficient cooperation;
- The North Seas Energy Cooperation as a forum to discuss the regulatory treatment of joint and hybrid offshore wind projects at EU and national level, including how to facilitate hybrid projects and what lessons can be learned from existing projects;
- The need to continue a common focus on deploying large amounts of offshore wind and keep investing in the North Seas, including improved and more efficient use of EU funds, to reach its full potential of becoming an innovative, efficient and cost-effective Green Power House of offshore renewable energies;
- That the work of the support groups is dependent on sufficient capacity and resources and, where appropriate, funding options;

Set as an objective:

- To facilitate the accelerated cost-effective deployment of offshore renewable energy, in particular wind, and the further energy interconnection between North Seas countries through voluntary cooperation, in particular through mutual exchange, common objectives and the implementation of joint and hybrid projects;
- To cooperate on maritime spatial plans that include offshore wind energy deployment and grid development, including from a regional perspective, especially on cross-border aspects as well as working within a common understanding and new initiatives for assessing environmental impacts;
- Taking into account national onshore grid planning, to work together towards a more coordinated offshore grid planning of the North Seas countries that is in line with maritime spatial planning;
- To work together towards the development of a multi-use approach and broad support of the shared use of the seas;
- To exchange best practices on national support schemes and respective cooperation models, to foster the coordination of national tendering processes, support the implementation of innovative wind projects and to discuss the role of EU financing instruments;
- To develop a shared long-term vision for the role of offshore renewable energy to deliver ambitious 2050 energy and climate objectives in the North Seas region and towards a joint understanding of the future energy system in the region;
- To work together towards the development and implementation of concrete joint and hybrid offshore wind projects of the North Seas countries including a fair distribution of costs and benefits across these countries and other actors involved;
- To work together among North Seas countries and with the European Commission towards an enabling framework that supports the implementation of joint and hybrid offshore wind projects, in particular with regard to electricity market arrangements, guidance to North Seas Countries on the implementation of cross-border projects, and discuss improved and more innovative use of EU financing, thereby contributing to a sustainable, secure and affordable energy supply in the North Seas countries, leading to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and further integration and increased efficiency of wholesale electricity markets.

- To work together towards a common understanding of medium and long term deployment needs of offshore wind energy in achieving our individual and common European renewable energy and climate targets, and the aim of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emission by 2050 in the EU.

And express their endeavours to:

- Support the implementation of the work programme set out in Annex I and to pursue cooperation in line with the governance and support framework set out in Annex II, with the aim of continuing the concrete cooperation and achieving the above objectives, by jointly providing capacity and where appropriate, search for funding on a best-effort basis;
- Communicate interim results internally and externally on a regular basis and thereby provide a basis for an open and transparent regional dialogue, including with stakeholders;
- Take stock of the progress made towards the implementation of the work programme and evaluate the functioning of the governance and support structure no later than three years after the signing of this declaration;
- Increase the share of virtual meetings, in particular of the NSEC Support Groups, in order to reduce the carbon footprint of the cooperation and to allow for more frequent discussions and more active participation of all relevant experts.

Nature of the Political Declaration:

This document records a political intent alone. It is not intended to establish any new legal commitments or to replace or modify any existing legal obligations.

All work in the North Seas Energy Cooperation should be in line with relevant EU legislation, the EEA Agreement, as well as with existing obligations under international law.

Where needed for cross border cooperation, and if of interest for NSEC participants, third countries to this declaration can be consulted on a technical level by the NSEC support groups. Moreover, for more structural, regular and ongoing cooperation a MoU could be concluded by the signatories to this Political Declaration and the potential third country.

Signed in Brussels, on the second day of December in the year two thousand twenty-one.

For the Kingdom of Belgium,
For the Kingdom of Denmark,
For the French Republic,
For the Federal Republic of Germany,
For Ireland,
For the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg,
For the Netherlands,
For the Kingdom of Norway,
For the Kingdom of Sweden,
For the European Commission,