



North Seas Energy Cooperation Action Agenda 2023-2024

on Implementing the offshore ambitions in the North Seas

Building on the Joint Statement on the North Seas Energy Cooperation (NSEC) of 12 September 2022, as well as the Esbjerg Declaration of Energy Ministers of 18 May 2022 and the Ostend Declaration of Energy Ministers of 24 April 2023, the members of NSEC endeavour to deliver upon our agreed offshore ambitions in the North Seas through the following actions¹, agreed in The Hague, The Netherlands, on 20 November 2023:

1. NSEC ministers welcome and aim to actively engage on the **European Commission's wind power package** consisting of an **Action Plan on wind power²** and a **Communication on Offshore Renewables³** with the objective to support the European wind industry, address the challenges it faces, and support the rapid upscaling and deployment of renewable energy for an energy resilient and prosperous Europe.
2. NSEC members welcome the **progress made on offshore hybrid projects** in the region since the North Sea summit in Ostend. NSEC members continue to accelerate their implementation, including by supporting the work of TSOs and market parties. Bringing the projects listed in the Ostend Declaration closer to realisation and identifying new projects with added European societal value as reflected in the recent submissions to ENTSO-E's Ten-year network development plan (TYNDP) 2024. NSEC EU member states commit to the **accelerated development of key cross-border infrastructure projects** recognised as projects of common interest and projects of mutual interest under the TEN-E Regulation⁴.
3. We welcome the progress made on the first **Offshore Network Development Plan (ONDP)**, to be published by ENTSO-E in January 2024. The ONDPs will serve as guidance for future forward-looking network investments. We are moving further towards optimised integrated energy system planning in our preparations for the next 2026 ONDP as part of the Ten-Year Network Development Plan. We will, in cooperation with our electricity, gas and (future) hydrogen network operators, gather information on **electrolysers and hydrogen infrastructure developments offshore and onshore planning** to feed this into our (integrated) long-term grid-planning. We recognise the importance of promoting cross-border projects, innovative projects, offshore energy hubs, and hybrid grid solutions across borders when they enhance efficiency, lower prices for consumers and reduce environmental impacts.
4. NSEC EU members welcome early and joint implementation and continue to strive for coordinated rules on the **European Market Design**, including to strengthen EU electricity market arrangements for offshore renewables in an offshore bidding zone in view of facilitating the necessary investment in hybrid projects. NSEC EU members continue working towards concrete **hybrid projects** and how to remove regulatory and financial bottlenecks, as well as all barriers arising from **permitting** procedures. In that regard, NSEC EU members are committed to the effective implementation of the Emergency Regulation on faster permitting for renewables⁵ and of all the measures related to permitting under the revised TEN-E Regulation and the revised Renewable Energy Directive⁶, including sufficient resources for swift processing of permit applications. NSEC ministers also contribute to the work of the European Commission in preparing effective guidance on **cost and benefit allocation** for offshore infrastructure and hybrid projects in EU basins to be published by mid-2024. With this purpose, NSEC ministers ask the relevant TSOs to research the cost and benefit allocation principles of meshed grid developments.

¹ The nature of this Action Agenda does not create any rights or obligations under national or international law and does not intend to replace or modify any existing legal obligations. The work of the North Seas Energy Cooperation should be in line with relevant EU and national legislation, the EEA agreement, as well as with existing obligations under international law. The actions will be continued in the work of the NSEC support groups and within the framework of the memorandum of understanding between the NSEC and UK.

² European Wind Power Action Plan, COM(2023) 669 final

³ Delivering on the EU offshore renewable energy ambitions, COM(2023) 668 final

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2022/869 on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/869/oj>

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2577/oj>

⁶ Renewable Energy Directive, Directive (EU) 2023/2413 as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/2413/oj>

5. We follow up on the political commitment to foster stronger collaboration within the sphere of **offshore energy security**. We aim to address energy security, both cyber and physical security, involving relevant stakeholders such as national defense. This would serve to discuss various aspects of offshore security, including but not limited to information sharing methodologies, the integration of security by design principles, and the advancement of cutting-edge detection technologies.

Sustainable Supply Chain and Financing Offshore Renewables in Europe

6. NSEC ministers will take action to increase visibility and predictability for the entire supply chain by enhancing coordination, including cooperation on ports infrastructure, access to raw materials, pipes and cables. We take note of the developments of the Clean Energy Industrial Forum's working group on offshore renewable energy and of the NSEC Ports Study. As a first step we will publish a **joint NSEC offshore wind energy tender planning** for the coming years to demonstrate that national governments translate ambitious targets into concrete action. This enables investments into the supply chain in Europe, including port infrastructure. Moreover, we will seek to get investors on board and unlock final investment decisions by giving long term investment signals in order to boost investor confidence.
7. We will jointly assess our experiences in the use of **qualitative criteria in auctions**, such as on circularity, nature protection and biodiversity, resilience, innovation, skills, responsible business conduct, social standards, and energy system integration. As well as on ensuring stability of energy prices through smart interactions between auctions and potentially de-risked (cross-border) power purchase agreements (PPAs). We will share best practices on this between NSEC members, for example building on expert recommendations. We will continue to look into cross-border financing solutions for offshore wind energy, such as the Renewable Energy Financing Mechanism and the Connecting Europe Facility, and continue to support the financing needs of other key cross-border infrastructures.

North Sea transitions: Energy and Nature

8. NSEC ministers recognise the need for a healthy environmental state of the marine ecosystem of the North Seas and an effective use of the limited marine space as a shared responsibility. We therefore continue to collectively address, in coordination with the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention) and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the issues that are most pressing for promoting a balanced co-existence of renewable energy, nature in a concrete action plan. This plan includes improving our understanding and assessment of the cumulative environmental impact of offshore renewable energy and grid planning on a sea basin level.
9. NSEC ministers recognise the importance to respond appropriately and timely to environmental threats and therefore, we will seek collaboration with MSP and biodiversity. NSEC ministers welcome the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI) and the initiative of the maritime spatial planning ministers to organise a summit in 2024 for Energy, Nature, Maritime Spatial Planning and Fisheries Ministers to explore the potential and added value, building on the work of existing fora, for cooperation across sectors in the North Seas.

Horizontal

10. We endeavour to maintain a high standard of public engagement on projects for offshore renewables by communicating with stakeholders and citizens in a transparent and inclusive way at an early stage of project development.
11. We welcome the renewed joint NSEC chapter in EU member states' draft National Energy and Climate Plans. EU member state ministers commit to include this in the final NECPs and continue collaborating on the joint reporting on progress.