EU strategy for offshore renewable energy

During the February 2022 plenary session, Parliament is due to vote on an own-initiative report on the EU offshore renewable energy strategy, as prepared and adopted by the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy. This constitutes Parliament’s response to the Commission’s strategy paper on the subject, adopted in November 2020 as part of the European Green Deal.

Background

On 11 December 2019, the European Commission adopted a communication on the European Green Deal (EGD). The EGD is a priority action area of the von der Leyen Commission, and its realisation will require a major increase in the uptake of clean, reliable and renewable energy sources. The EGD communication noted that 'increasing offshore wind production will be essential, building on regional cooperation between Member States', while the roadmap (annexed) proposed an EU offshore wind strategy in 2020.

On 15 January 2020, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the EGD, expressing support for the Commission’s main objectives, and welcomed the idea of an EU offshore wind strategy. When the latter was eventually adopted as a broader offshore renewable energy strategy (see below), the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) decided to prepare an own-initiative (INI) resolution on the subject.

European Commission communication

On 19 November 2020, the European Commission adopted a communication on an EU strategy to harness the potential of offshore renewable energy for a climate-neutral future. This new strategy was accompanied by a staff working document to provide regulatory guidance on electricity market arrangements for offshore renewable hybrid projects combining generation and interconnection.

The Commission’s strategy saw potential for a vast increase in the volume of electricity generated from offshore wind, with capacity rising from around 12 gigawatts (GW) to at least 60 GW by 2030 (+400 %). The 2020s and 2030s could see a further 400 % increase, bringing total capacity to around 300 GW by 2050. Offshore wind capacity could then be complemented by around 40 GW of ocean energy (tidal, wave) and other emerging offshore technologies (e.g. floating wind and solar, algae for biofuels). These new offshore technologies have huge energy potential but are some way from being able to supply the energy market on a commercial basis. In contrast, offshore wind on fixed foundations is a commercially viable technology whose costs continue to fall, making it competitive with other renewables as well as fossil fuels, and helping the EU to maintain a degree of technological leadership in this field (see 2020 EPRS briefing on Offshore wind energy in the EU).

European Parliament position

The own-initiative report was adopted in the ITRE committee on 30 November 2021. The report calls for the EU and its Member States to scale up their offshore renewable energy production, and extend its scope to all of Europe’s sea basins. The report emphasises the need for major investment in infrastructure, improved collaboration between Member States, further research and development, streamlined permits and maritime spatial plans, and more effective market design, including access to sufficient EU funding necessary to implement these goals.

Own-initiative report: 2021/2012(INI); Committee responsible: ITRE; Rapporteur: Morten Petersen (Renew, Denmark).