



2021/2012(INI)

21.6.2021

OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on a European strategy for offshore renewable energy
(2021/2012(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Catherine Chabaud

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- having regard to the Commission communication of 21 November 2011 entitled ‘Developing a Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Ocean Area’ (COM(2011)0782) and the subsequent Commission communication of 23 July 2020 on ‘A new approach to the Atlantic Maritime Strategy - Atlantic Action Plan 2.0’ (COM(2020)0329),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 entitled ‘The European Green Deal’ (COM(2019)0640),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 May 2020 entitled ‘EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives’ (COM(2020)0380),
- having regard to the Commission recommendations of May 2020 for positive interactions between offshore wind farms and fisheries,
- having regard to the Commission’s 2020 Blue Economy Report of 11 June 2020,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 8 July 2020 entitled ‘A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe’ (COM(2020)0301),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 September 2020 entitled ‘Stepping up Europe’s 2030 climate ambition - Investing in a climate neutral future for the benefit of our people’ (COM(2020)0562),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 19 November 2020 on an EU Strategy to harness the potential of offshore renewable energy for a climate neutral future (COM(2020)0741),
- having regard to Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)¹,
- having regard to Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds²,
- having regard to Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora³,
- having regard to Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council

¹ OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19.

² OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7.

³ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning⁴,

- having regard to the EU Hydrogen Strategy’s objective of achieving 40 GW of renewables-linked electrolysis capacity by 2030,
 - having regard to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to the Kyoto Protocol thereto and to the Paris Agreement,
 - having regard to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),
 - having regard to the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services published by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on 31 May 2019,
 - having regard to the special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) entitled ‘Global Warming of 1.5°C’, its fifth assessment report (AR5) and the synthesis report thereon, its special report on climate change and land, and its special report on the ocean and cryosphere in a changing climate,
 - having regard to the study of November 2020 requested by the Committee on Fisheries on the impact of the use of offshore wind and other marine renewables on European fisheries,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2018 on international ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 28 November 2019 on the climate and environment emergency⁶,
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal⁷,
 - having regard to its resolution on the impact on the fishing sector of offshore windfarms and other renewable energy systems (2019/2158(INI)),
1. Recalls the EU’s objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest; highlights the agreement reached between the European Parliament and the Council on the European Climate Law, which sets a 2030 target for emission reductions of at least 55 % compared with 1990, while at the same time ensuring that actual reductions will reach at least close to 57 %, with the objective of delivering the EU’s fair share to implementing the Paris Agreement, in particular its goal of pursuing efforts to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels; stresses the importance of the clean energy transition, which will minimise imports of fossil fuels, generate jobs, develop communities, and raise the living standards of all EU citizens,

⁴ OJ L 257, 28.8.2014, p. 135.

⁵ OJ C 458, 19.12.2018, p. 9.

⁶ OJ C 232, 16.6.2021, p. 28.

⁷ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0005.

contributing to the post-COVID-19 recovery;

2. Underlines that renewable energy is key for decarbonisation, and that its deployment must be considered for all European sea basins in a coordinated manner taking into account all three pillars of sustainability; take note of the Commission's ambition to reach 340 GW of offshore renewable energy capacity by 2050; notes in this regard the right of the Member States to decide on the structure of their energy mix in accordance with Article 194(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU);
3. Recalls that offshore renewable energy has a social, economic and spatial impact on fisheries and aquaculture, as well as on ecosystems and biodiversity, for example due to the relocation of fishing areas, underwater noise pollution or risks of collisions; calls therefore for the establishment of networks, mandatory dialogue and effective and continuous cooperation with fishers, aquaculture producers and their organisations, at an early stage, to ensure fair and proper coexistence of activities through effective participation, especially on areas for installations and grid infrastructure, and security zones, with feedback from experience and the exchange of best practices, in order to guarantee acceptance;
4. Emphasises the need for a proper economic, socio-economic and socio-cultural impact assessment and for local ecosystems and specificities to be taken into account before the implementation of a project, with an integrated management approach via marine spatial planning; suggests creating transparent guidelines on how to alleviate the potential for conflict, including through mitigation measures and different forms of compensation, and creating a level playing field between fisheries and offshore renewable energies; welcomes in this regard the Commission's initiative and urges the Commission to conduct further analysis on the interactions between offshore renewable energy and other sea activities;
5. Highlights the need to avoid negative long-term impacts caused by offshore renewable energy devices on the marine environment, ecosystems, fish stocks and biodiversity, including international migration of birds and consequently on fisheries as a whole over their life cycle, from construction through operation and decommissioning, especially impacts on sea and air currents, wave generation, tidal amplitudes, bedload sediment transport, infrasonic noise from rotating blades, which could drive fish and marine mammals away, electromagnetic fields from underwater cables and underwater noise from pile driving; underlines therefore the importance of detailed studies to assess such impacts of existing offshore renewable energy devices;
6. Welcomes the Commission's commitment in the strategy to facilitate dialogue on the environmental, economic and social sustainability of offshore renewable energy and to promote a 'community of practice' where all stakeholders, including industry, NGOs, fishers and scientists, can exchange views, share experience and work on joint projects at an early stage;
7. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to facilitate community energy production schemes that allow coastal communities and cooperatives, including fishers, to generate their own electricity and reinvest profits back into the community;
8. Points out that small-scale fishers will be particularly affected by changes such as the

spatial distribution and availability of commercially fished marine species, closure of fishing grounds for safety reasons or imposed changes on fishing activities or methods as they may not have the capacity to move to fishing grounds further afield or to change fishing method, particularly if offshore wind farms are located in territorial waters (extending 12 nautical miles from the coast);

9. Emphasises that the precautionary principle, in accordance with Article 191(2) of the TFEU, should apply if decisions have to be taken before the required knowledge or information is available;
10. Emphasises that the deployment of offshore renewable energy should be done through a co-benefits approach, based on a thorough assessment ensuring benefits for fishers and local communities; points out that with such an approach each activity benefits from the other, including, for example, benefits for marine biodiversity and fish stocks preservation through reef effect and reserve effect, for marine knowledge through data collection with sensors installed on infrastructures, and for local job creation, including ports development and modernisation, especially fishing ports, meaning the whole community benefits, from citizens, fishers and local communities, to industries and scientists; considers, in this respect, that the positive impact of infrastructures should be promoted, and stresses that achieving co-location options, which is of utmost importance in achieving a win-win situation for both sustainable fisheries and the offshore energy sector, must be prioritised;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to continuously improve the involvement all stakeholders, including fishers, and to improve cross-border cooperation, including with the United Kingdom, in maritime spatial planning when developing, revising and implementing the plans of Member States; stresses in this regard the need to find solutions to common problems, to integrate electricity grid connection and to learn from best practices; stresses that proper spatial planning is crucial to avoid an increase in spatial conflicts in European waters, something that has been suggested by spatial overlap analysis; calls on Member States, in this regard, to take into account the need to ensure that negative effects of offshore renewable energy systems on the environment and on socioeconomic and territorial cohesion are avoided, especially in regions dependent on fisheries; therefore encourages placing them away from fishing grounds;
12. Calls on all Member States to apply an ecosystem-based approach to maritime spatial planning as referred to in Article 1(3) of Directive 2008/56/EC and Article 5(1) of Directive 2014/89/EU with the aim of ensuring that the collective pressure of all activities is kept within levels compatible with the achievement of good environmental status while contributing to the sustainable use of marine goods and services; welcomes, in this regard, the strategy's aim of providing a long-term framework that promotes sound coexistence between offshore installations and other uses of the sea space, contributes to the protection of the environment and allows for thriving fishing communities;
13. Urges Member States to designate specific historical and traditional fishing grounds to local fishers as areas that are to remain free of offshore renewables;

14. Underlines that offshore renewable energy could be deployed in marine protected areas, with management committees which consist of relevant stakeholders, including economic sectors such as fisheries, as well as scientists, NGOs, local communities and public administrations and that facilitate cooperation and dialogue, if in line with conservation objectives in accordance with applicable EU nature legislation and guidelines, in order to reduce the impact on fisheries;
15. Recalls that offshore wind energy is one of the most advanced technologies, but other technologies with less impact on fisheries and aquaculture are also promising and are sometimes already available, even if not yet put to large-scale use, such as thermal energy, wave energy, tidal energy, biofuels from algae, etc., and can be more appropriate in some territories where fishing takes place;
16. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to adopt an ambitious approach to the development of floating offshore windfarms, which have the potential for development in deep water areas, expanding the viable zone for wind energy development while reducing visibility from the shore and the impact during construction;
17. Highlights in this regard the potential of renewable hydrogen, in combination with renewable energy systems, as reflected in the EU Hydrogen Strategy's objective of achieving 40 GW of renewables-linked electrolysis capacity by 2030;
18. Calls for additional support for research and development in order to accelerate the deployment of different offshore renewable energy technologies, and encourages further monitoring of the impact on the environment, scientific analyses and data exchange as new policies, findings and technologies are constantly being developed;
19. Underlines that the energy mixes of outermost regions and islands are highly dependent on fossil fuel imports, despite having opportunities for renewables; calls on the Commission and Member States, when implementing the European Green Deal, to pay special attention and dedicate specific funding to the development of offshore renewable energy in these territories in order to minimise dependency on fossil fuels; calls for the specific characteristics of islands to be taken into account when drawing up projects that can be financed;
20. Calls on the Commission and Member States to facilitate training and education in offshore renewables for coastal communities, outermost regions and EU islands as a priority, in order to ensure a just transition for those communities and sectors most affected by climate change;
21. Emphasises that a long-term and all-encompassing vision is necessary to assess the impact of offshore renewable energy on other activities, such as fishing, local communities and ecosystems; calls for a circular economy and life cycle approach for these projects; considers it essential for assessments to this end to be carried out on infrastructures prior to the execution of projects, in order to foster eco-design through specific materials and designs of the infrastructures which can enhance the development of local biodiversity, and to have plans for the end of the project, such as through using recycling methods or maintaining infrastructure as artificial reef, ensuring that all long-term sustainable impacts must be considered and adhere to the principles of a circular

economy;

22. Calls on the Commission to carry out the necessary impact assessments and keep Parliament constantly informed.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	16.6.2021
Result of final vote	+: 23 -: 3 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Clara Aguilera, Pietro Bartolo, François-Xavier Bellamy, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Isabel Carvalhais, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Rosanna Conte, Rosa D'Amato, Giuseppe Ferrandino, João Ferreira, Søren Gade, Francisco Guerreiro, Niclas Herbst, France Jamet, Pierre Karleskind, Predrag Fred Matic, Francisco José Millán Mon, Grace O'Sullivan, Manuel Pizarro, Caroline Roose, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Peter van Dalen, Emma Wiesner, Theodoros Zagorakis
Substitutes present for the final vote	Manuel Bompard, Raffaele Stancanelli, Annalisa Tardino

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

23	+
PPE	François-Xavier Bellamy, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Niclas Herbst, Francisco José Millán Mon, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Theodoros Zagorakis, Peter van Dalen
Renew	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Søren Gade, Pierre Karleskind, Emma Wiesner
S&D	Clara Aguilera, Pietro Bartolo, Isabel Carvalhais, Giuseppe Ferrandino, Predrag Fred Matić, Manuel Pizarro
The Left	Manuel Bompard, João Ferreira
Verts/ALE	Rosa D'Amato, Francisco Guerreiro, Grace O'Sullivan, Caroline Roose

3	-
ECR	Bert-Jan Ruissen, Raffaele Stancanelli
ID	France Jamet

2	0
ID	Rosanna Conte, Annalisa Tardino

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention