

## REPORT

Meeting: **EP INI Report on Offshore Renewables**

Parties: **European Parliament delegation** (the impact on the fishing sector of offshore windfarms and other renewable energy systems), **NSAC delegation** (Offshore Wind Farms Focus Group)

Date&Time: **24 March 2021; 12.00-13.10 CET**

Location: **MS Teams**

Chair: **MEP Morten Helveg Petersen**

Rapporteur: **Tamara Talevska**

### 1. Welcome and introduction

MEP Morten Helveg Petersen, rapporteur of file on the impact on the fishing sector of offshore windfarms and other renewable energy systems, welcomed everyone and conducted a round of introductions of his team members. The NSAC followed suit with the eight members of the NSAC focus group on Offshore Wind Farms, the Executive Committee Chair and the Secretariat.

MEP Petersen informed the participants that the timeframe for INI report on offshore renewables is half a year with a vote planned in July 2021. With view to inform the mentioned report, the drafting group decided to engage with NSAC stakeholders for further insights. Petersen noted that the issues can be divided into three categories: 1) infrastructure and the issue of grids and related investments, 2) market design issues and balance between developers and transition systems, and 3) the issue of permitting, maritime spatial planning, coexistence, and other aspects of aligning different interests at sea. He reminded the group that the EU pledged to secure more than 60 GWATT of energy from offshore wind installations by 2030 pointing to a deployment of offshore renewables in an unprecedented scale. It shall now be established whether such a project is viable in light of multiple users and how could it be best executed.

### 2 NSAC Advice on Offshore Windfarms

Dale Rodmell, NFFO/Chair of the NSAC Offshore Windfarms, took the floor by explaining that the focus group had been established under the auspices of a permanent NSAC Ecosystem Working Group. *At this point Rodmell was cut off in an internet outage.* Kenn Skau Fischer, NSAC Chair, asked Henrik Lund to highlight the most important issues from a view of fisheries organisations.

Henrik Lund, DFPO, noted initially that while previous windfarms had been placed in shallow areas where there was no fishing interest, nowadays they are being placed on the main fishing grounds which inevitably sparks conflicts. Fishers in, for instance, the Kattegat do not have any opportunity to move to another fishing ground when presented with such development. Lund stressed that while these areas have been screened for various factors determining financial optimum for deployment of offshore renewables (such as the depth of the sea and windspeed), they have not been screened for fishing activities. In this sense co-existence is not part of the agreement at all (in DK), and fishers in fact have no access to their traditional fishing grounds.

At this point it was decided Tamara Talevska to run through Rodmell's presentation, listing the 17 recommendations as provided in the [NSAC Advice on Offshore Wind Farms](#).

### 3 Discussion: fisheries coexistence with offshore wind farms

Peter Breckling, German Fisheries Association, explained that the North Sea for fishers is their habitat, a place where they spend majority of their lives and make a living for their families. With introduction of new players in the North Sea basin, their grounds are lost, and they are forced to make their living elsewhere. He additionally noted that offshore windfarms are closed for all fisheries in Germany. Any (new) interferences in nature needs to be compensated in Germany. Windfarm construction companies have to pay for the area they cover to nature conservation agency. The payment is reduced by about 30% if the are windfarm area is not fished after the construction. Therefore in order to reduce these payments, they agree with the closure of fisheries. Breckling stressed that if such habitats are lost for fishers, a fair compensation seems appropriate for the losses of fishermen.

Malcolm Morrison, SFF, noted that while in the UK fishing officially is not prohibited within wind parks and fishing may continue post construction, it is questionable whether fishers actually maintain the level of their economic activity as pre construction. In terms of Marine Spatial Planning in Scotland, Morrison noted that there is one general policy and 11 sectoral policies supposedly designed to make coexistence possible. He was convinced that companies dealing with renewables discuss coexistence as a compensation for 'plundering' fishing grounds.

MEP Petersen wondered whether the estimated 3% of fishing ground that would need to be re-allocated to wind operators would suffice with view to fulfil the 60 GWATT target as proposed by the EU. Lund responded that this would indeed be possible, as according to ICES estimations fishers fish approximately 56% of the North Sea. He highlighted that the question is not whether this is doable - the problem lies in the lack of dialogue with fishers.

MEP Petersen asked how much difference would such a dialogue make in terms of wind farms deployment. Lund concurred that the cost of placement would be different, but said that the difference would be minor. He stressed that there are still areas where fishing is not as present and that with a proper dialogue with stakeholders (fishers) these areas could be

identified, and placements agreed. It is important that fisheries become part of these screenings.

MEP Petersen noted that there were arguments for positive ecological impacts of wind installations on fish stocks. In this sense fixed bottom installations on seabed would add to biodiversity. He wondered what the NSAC take on this would be.

Breckling firstly commented on the question of 3% allocation of fishing ground – he believed that this figure is misleading and that fishers sense that a much larger percentage is being taken over by the wind companies. If the number was indeed 3%, this discussion would have been very different, he claimed. On the positive impact on stocks he noted that lots of investigations on benthic fauna after reduction of fishing effort had taken place and results showed that socio-economic impacts on specific wind farm site was that the amount of fish caught in the area could be caught by one vessel in 50% of the area if they fished once a year – in one word negligible.

Afterwards biologists said that benthic systems are destroyed by fisheries. It is as if to say that with a ban on fisheries stocks will increase due to windfarms. These two arguments do not align. There is also a difference between highly migratory pelagic stocks and some demersal stocks, and other more static species. While it is true that migratory stocks could be caught elsewhere, one needs to keep in mind that CPUE (Catch Per Unit of Effort) shall be optimised if the economic viability of fishing fleets is to be maintained.

Lund gave example of one of the windfarms in the North Sea, where scientists conducted a study and essentially recorded very little fish. He noted that wind farm foundations only take up a low percentage of the seabed, which would mean a rather low impact on biodiversity. He believed that overall this was a poor argument for building more of such structures. Lund gave account of another wind park in Kattegat where the access to fishers was granted but the cormorants ate the fish, leaving a poor yield for the fishers.

MEP Petersen wondered if stocks are mobile, to what extent do wind parks affect fishing opportunities. Would in some cases stocks remain inside the infrastructures?

Breckling responded that while mobile species can be caught elsewhere, economic aspect of the activity is far away from optimal. If access would be granted to some specific fishing activities for certain species, this could be of benefit for these gears and fisheries (e.g. static gear). While the EU administration supports multiuse approach, which is considered good, in Germany this is not possible to achieve – fisheries will need to be displaced and this will inevitably cause economic loss.

Lund explained further that even when species migrate – if there is no access to the area, it is impossible to catch the stock. Such displacements can sometimes translate to 2-3 years of poor fishing opportunities. One example is sandeel which is static and lives only on specific fishing grounds, in which case placing a windfarm on such location would mean loss of fishing grounds.

Rodmell added that small-scale vessels will be limited in their ability to access fishing grounds by default. Displacement of one fishery to another, static gear fisheries not being compatible with towed gear etc. could cause further conflict.

MEP Petersen noted that currently fixed bottom installations are considered in the North Sea. He wondered whether there are any issues related to fisheries with regards to floating and fixed technologies? Lund responded that with floating parts lots of cables are required to secure the installation and this is to the detriment of fisheries as vessels are not able to access these. Femke de Boer, SWFPA, added that there are floating windfarms in Scotland, however fisheries are completely shut out.

Rosalie Crespin, CNPMM, confirmed that as part of the postponement of fishing effort, small-scale fishers will be particularly affected and will lead to an increase in fuel consumption as well as will be limited by regulations in some area (fishing efforts and quotas). About the positive ecological impacts discussed earlier, Crespin questioned the veracity of this information for commercial species and the future of biodiversity when wind farms at the end of their life will be decommissioned (conservation or remove of the biodiversity?). About the practice of fishing in floating wind farms, Crespin confirmed that in France certain fishing practices will be prohibited. Finally, Crespin stressed the importance of dialogue with fishers to integrate them in the energy transition.

#### 4 Close of meeting

MEP Petersen thanked the participants for their valuable insights and asked for the presentation to be shared with the drafting group. This was granted. Kenn Skau Fischer thanked Petersen for the invitation and stressed that any further queries will be answered. The meeting ended at 13.10 CET.

#### 5 List of participants

Last name	First name	Organisation
Breckling	Peter	NSAC, German Fisheries Association
Cornet	Alexandre	NSAC, WWF
Couhysder	Neil	NSAC, Rederscentrale
Crespin	Rosalie	NSAC, CNPMM
De Boer	Femke	NSAC, Scottish White Fish PA
Fischer	Kenn Skau	NSAC, Danish Fishermen PO
Lancelot	Loeiza	NSAC, FROM Nord
Lund	Henrik	NSAC, Danish Fishermen PO
Morrison	Malcolm	NSAC, Scottish Fishermen Federation
Rodmell	Dale	NSAC, NFFO
Vlietinck	Jasmine	NSAC, Rederscentrale

Dessimirova	Denitza	EP
Helveg Petersen	Morten	EP, MEP Renew Europe
Kelstrup	Mikkel	EP, MEP Petersen office
Matzen	Jeppe	EP
Mordas	Dominykas	EP, Renew Europe
Voicu	Cristian	EP, MEP Petersen office