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Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Dení Aguilar Bellamy

Renewables Grid Initiative

“Offshore wind and grid infrastructure must be planned and deployed hand in hand with the protection and restoration of marine *ecosystems”*

About RGI

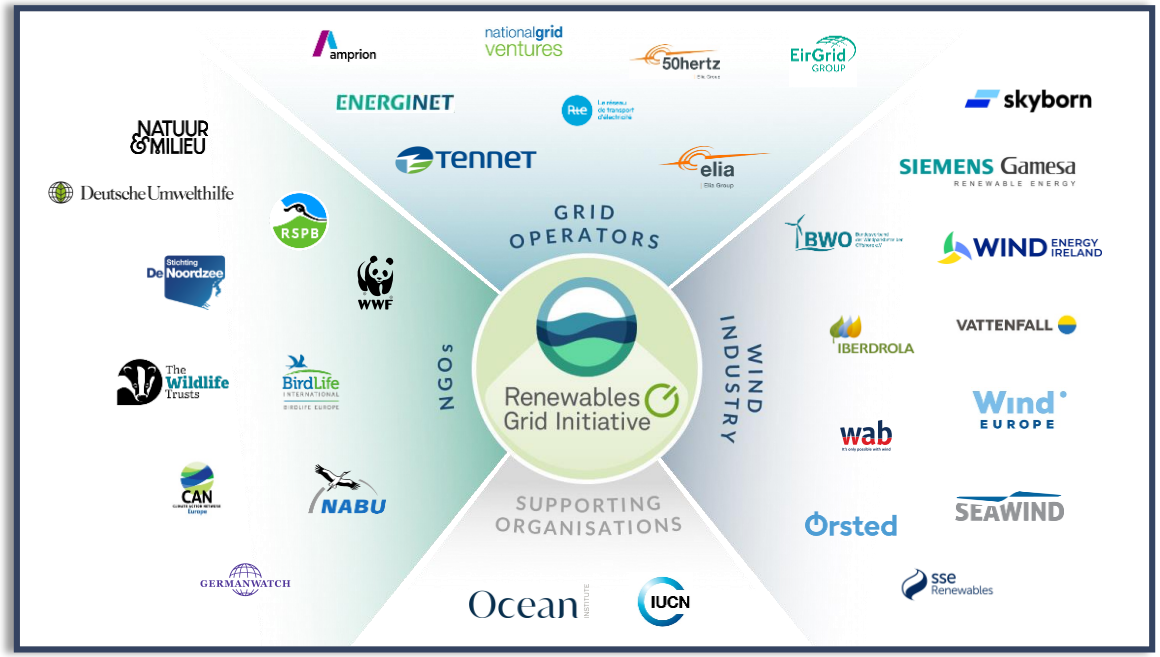
RGI is a unique collaboration of NGOs and TSOs from across Europe engaging in an ‘energy transition ecosystem-of-actors’. We promote fair, transparent, sustainable grid development to enable the growth of renewables to achieve full decarbonisation in line with the Paris Agreement.

Renewables Grid Initiative

Supporting Members: europacable Try life without us, IUCN

About OCEaN

About Med OCEaN



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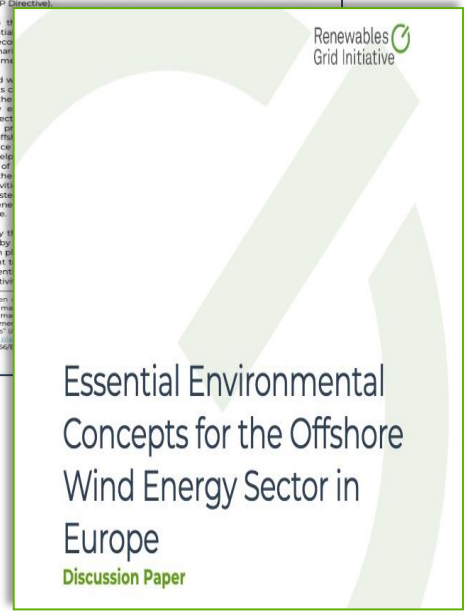
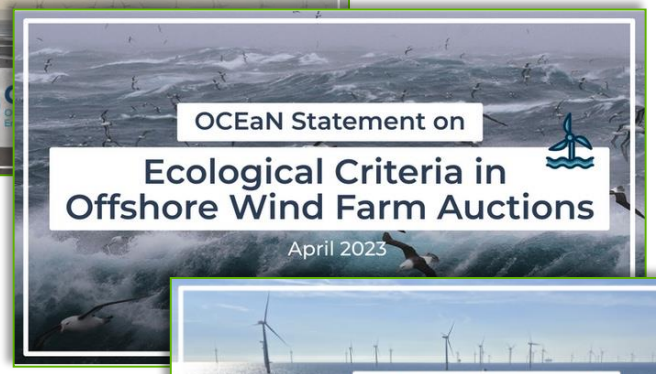
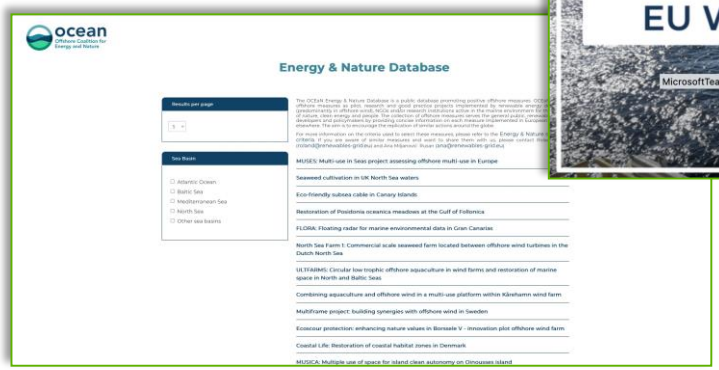
Highlights of the work of OCEaN







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Med OCEaN Founding Members

Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature – Mediterranean Sea

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Memorandum of Understanding

Coalition for aligning the development of offshore wind energy with nature protection and healthy marine ecosystems in the Mediterranean basin and adjacent Atlantic waters

Mission Statement

The Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature in the Mediterranean Sea (Med OCEaN) aims to develop a collaborative approach to support the sustainable deployment of offshore wind and grid infrastructure, while preventing the loss of biodiversity, and safeguarding healthy marine ecosystems. Med OCEaN will therefore contribute to the implementation of EU's climate, energy, and environmental objectives, including the nature restoration targets.

Background information

We are at a crossroads where different crises need to be tackled simultaneously: climate change, biodiversity loss, energy security and economic recovery. To address these crises, Europe has, on the one hand, taken ambitious commitments to deploy renewable energy sources and remove fossil fuels from the entire system. This includes the expansion and acceleration of wind energy infrastructure, with offshore wind representing a significant share of the new capacity to be deployed (more than 150 GW by 2030). On the other hand, the European Commission has proposed the EU Nature Restoration Law, which aims to restore 20% of Europe's land and sea by 2030.

However, the commitments and targets set to address these complex crises can overlap and potentially come into conflict. An example of this is the task of allocating space for an increasing amount of offshore renewable energy infrastructure and for nature to recover and thrive, in already busy waters where many marine users interact. It is therefore of paramount importance to advocate for the timely deployment of offshore wind and grid infrastructure hand in hand with the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems. It is also crucial to create a space for constructive dialogue between different marine stakeholders, where solutions on how to improve and speed up the planning and deployment of offshore wind and grid infrastructure while preserving and restoring our European seas can be jointly designed.

When it to comes to the Mediterranean Seas basin and the adjacent Atlantic waters, offshore wind is still at an early stage of development and relies on complex interactions with different stakeholders. The Mediterranean is recognised as a biodiversity hotspot, representing 4-18% of the world's marine biodiversity, with an estimated rate of endemism of 30%. Furthermore, as a consequence of different anthropological pressures, the region is among the sea areas most impacted by human activities. To tackle the complexity of offshore wind deployment in

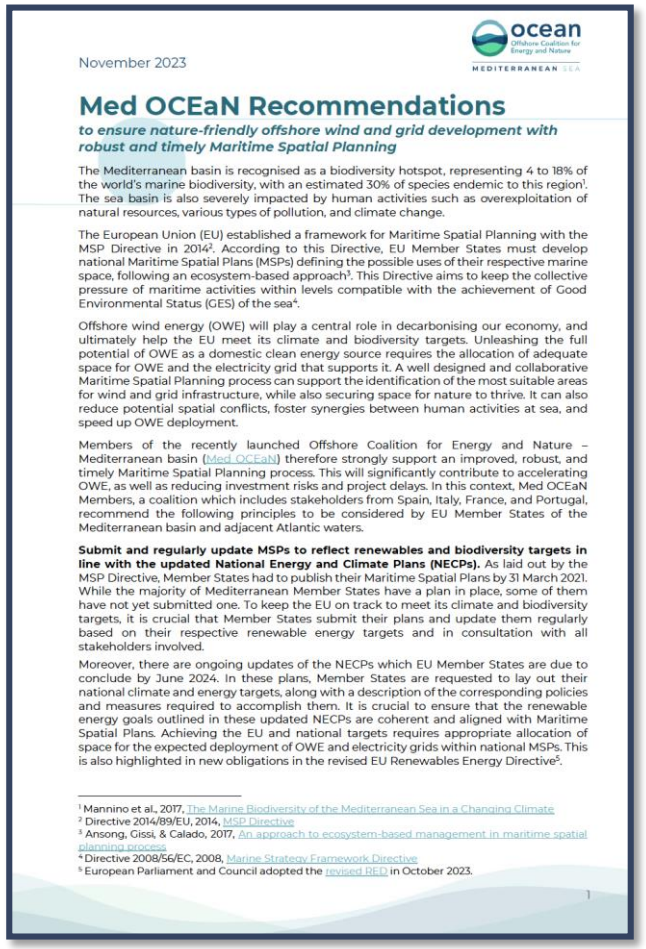
Topics

- Maritime spatial planning and OECMs
- Environmental impacts of floating technology
- Co-location of offshore wind with other activities

Med OCEaN Recommendations

To ensure nature-friendly offshore wind and grid development with robust and timely Maritime Spatial Planning

1. Submit and regularly update MSPs to reflect renewables and biodiversity targets in line with the updated NECPs.
2. Implement an ecosystem-based approach to MSP to support the achievement of Good Environmental Status of the seas.
3. Establish an ecologically coherent cross-border network of effectively managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).
4. Collect marine data continuously to guide responsive and adaptive decision-making.
5. Consider multi-use in offshore wind farms from the early planning stages.
6. Improve stakeholder participation in MSP.
7. Enable cross-border collaboration.



November 2023

Med OCEaN Recommendations

to ensure nature-friendly offshore wind and grid development with robust and timely Maritime Spatial Planning

The Mediterranean basin is recognised as a biodiversity hotspot, representing 4 to 18% of the world's marine biodiversity, with an estimated 30% of species endemic to this region[1]. The sea basin is also severely impacted by human activities such as overexploitation of natural resources, various types of pollution, and climate change.

The European Union (EU) established a framework for Maritime Spatial Planning with the MSP Directive in 2014[2]. According to this Directive, EU Member States must develop national Maritime Spatial Plans (MSPs) defining the possible uses of their respective marine space, following an ecosystem-based approach[3]. This Directive aims to keep the collective pressure of maritime activities within levels compatible with the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) of the sea[4].

Offshore wind energy (OWE) will play a central role in decarbonising our economy, and ultimately help the EU meet its climate and biodiversity targets. Unleashing the full potential of OWE as a domestic clean energy source requires the allocation of adequate space for OWE and the electricity grid that supports it. A well designed and collaborative Maritime Spatial Planning process can support the identification of the most suitable areas for wind and grid infrastructure, while also securing space for nature to thrive. It can also reduce potential spatial conflicts, foster synergies between human activities at sea, and speed up OWE deployment.

Members of the recently launched Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature – Mediterranean basin (Med OCEaN) therefore strongly support an improved, robust, and timely Maritime Spatial Planning process. This will significantly contribute to accelerating OWE, as well as reducing investment risks and project delays. In this context, Med OCEaN Members, a coalition which includes stakeholders from Spain, Italy, France, and Portugal, recommend the following principles to be considered by EU Member States of the Mediterranean basin and adjacent Atlantic waters.

Submit and regularly update MSPs to reflect renewables and biodiversity targets in line with the updated National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). As laid out by the MSP Directive, Member States had to publish their Maritime Spatial Plans by 31 March 2021. While the majority of Mediterranean Member States have a plan in place, some of them have not yet submitted one. To keep the EU on track to meet its climate and biodiversity targets, it is crucial that Member States submit their plans and update them regularly based on their respective renewable energy targets and in consultation with all stakeholders involved.

Moreover, there are ongoing updates of the NECPs which EU Member States are due to conclude by June 2024. In these plans, Member States are requested to lay out their national climate and energy targets, along with a description of the corresponding policies and measures required to accomplish them. It is crucial to ensure that the renewable energy goals outlined in these updated NECPs are coherent and aligned with Maritime Spatial Plans. Achieving the EU and national targets requires appropriate allocation of space for the expected deployment of OWE and electricity grids within national MSPs. This is also highlighted in new obligations in the revised EU Renewables Energy Directive[5].

[1] Mannino et al., 2017, The Marine Biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea in a Changing Climate
[2] Directive 2014/89/EU, 2014, MSP Directive
[3] Ansong, Gissi, & Calado, 2017, An approach to ecosystem-based management in maritime spatial planning process
[4] Directive 2008/56/EC, 2008, Marine Strategy Framework Directive
[5] European Parliament and Council adopted the revised RED in October 2023.

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Thank you!