

## Introduction to the planning and participation activities in POWER

The planning and participation workstream intends to improve the integration of the different planning systems in the Member States bordering the North Sea. Its aim is to give insight in possible improvements in the decision-making process for the location of offshore wind farms (OWF), and to harmonize planning and information strategies in compliance with government legislation. This includes objective information and the possibility of participation in the decision making process of all the stakeholders that might be affected by an OWF.

These improvements can be realised in a variety of ways, i.e. by the development of transnational strategies, the creation of a credible and accessible knowledge base or by redefining and redistributing task and powers. Besides a General Guidance, an Information Package and an Information and Decision Support System (IDSS) will be created during the course of the planning and participation activities.

The participation of four different partner countries in the activities provides an innovative element through the sharing of information, experience as well as expertise and promoting a recommended 'best practice' in planning, decision and realisation of offshore wind energy for a trans-European approach. Moreover, this project partnership is not only between single partners from each country, but between partnerships of the public and private sector in each country.

Thus this kind of transnational cooperation creates obvious benefits for all the Northsea Regions dealing with offshore wind energy.

### A General Guidance for Offshore Wind Energy

Particularly projects of the size of an OWF whose effects are clearly transnational require cross-border communication and interaction on all the levels of administration. Due to the differing administrative structures in the respective countries improving transnational collaboration and the promotion of proper planning strategies will be an ambitious challenge of the project.

These strategies need to comply with national and European legislation. Thus environmental issues (EC bird and habitat directives, Natura 2000, safety of ships) have to be considered in this context as well as technical (grid connection, monitoring) and economic issues, information and public acceptance and project planning subjects.

Starting with a quick scan (Offshore Wind Energy in the North Sea Region) as base line analysis including an inventory of all offshore wind farm projects in the NSR, a description of the decision making process and involved stakeholders - and an evaluation of best practice projects (Case Studies) should clarify which specific themes will finally be considered in the guidance.

The final guidance might be an appropriate tool for supporting both authorities and OWF planners.

### Information Package for Offshore Wind Energy

Information and education of the public will be of crucial importance for increasing the acceptance for offshore wind energy. Thus improving the availability of relevant information - presented in an interactive and multimedia context - for all interested parties is a central aim of the planning and participation workstream.

Objective of the Information Package is to give insight in the ways offshore wind farms are planned, realised and maintained. Further, offshore wind energy is presented in a broader context for instance climate change, energy production and wind energy development.

The dissemination of information is underlined by the installation of an information center that is opened to the broad public in the Port of Oostend in Belgium. Information material and a multimedia platform - a mixture of new telecommunication based techniques that are flexible applicable on touch screens, mobile PC terminals and websites - are further important components of the Information Package. Information

will be presented mainly for kids, pupils, students and the general interested public.

#### Information and Decision Support System

A powerful tool for informing the broad public, as well as improving planning processes and societal decision-making is an Information and Decision Support System that will be developed within this workstream. The IDSS will allow an objective assessment of various impacts of an OWF. It can be easily used to integrate many stakeholders in decision-making and offers the possibility to evaluate their demands and preferences during the planning procedure.