

EWEA Press Release

OFFSHORE: the new frontier of wind power ?

Milan, 9 May – Offshore wind energy is still a limited market but has great potential in Europe, delegates heard at the European Wind Energy Conference in Milan, Italy today.

Building wind turbines at sea is currently one of the most important challenges facing the European wind industry, as the offshore industry is a critical frontier in the continued development of wind power in Europe. “We need to see strong growth in offshore wind farms in order to achieve the target of 20% of the European Union’s overall energy supply to come from renewable sources by 2020”, said Christian Kjaer, Chief Executive of the European Wind Energy Association (EWEA), who is organising the conference. “However, many barriers and constraints need to be addressed to unlock the full potential of offshore technology”, Kjaer added.

The conference featured a host of specialised sessions dedicated to offshore advancement, and heard positive signals from all of the leading wind countries. Denmark has approximately 400 MW already installed at sea, with the UK next at nearly 300 MW’s installed, followed by the the Netherlands with nearly 140 MW installed as of the end of 2006.

It is expected that a second wave of European countries will join the European offshore industry within the next three years, with wind farms already under development in Germany, Sweden and France.

In Spain - currently a leader of the onshore market, it is expected that new regulation in the country for offshore wind will simplify the authorisation process and aid the launch of offshore activity mainly in Galicia and Andalucía. New political commitment regarding the promotion of offshore wind will also significantly help the cause of the 31 Spanish projects currently waiting for authorisation.

The morning’s speakers summarised the existing barriers and obstacles to the strong development of offshore wind farms. It was heard that the heavy and complex procedures for authorisations and permits slow down many European projects. Difficulty in connecting to the grid is another obstacle met by developers. Another issue regards responsibility for connection costs. In the UK and Denmark, transmissions system operators bear the connection costs, whereas in the Netherlands such costs are borne by the developers, which seriously increases the financial burden and slows down the development of offshore wind.

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High development and operational costs were also identified as an important barrier. The wind industry's ongoing calls for more research funds and projects will be helped by the recently launched European Wind Energy Technology Platform (TP Wind). Lead by EWEA and endorsed by the European Commission, TP Wind will help to coordinate R&D issues and clearly define research needs.

"European cooperation is key," confirmed Jens Bömer, speaking on behalf of the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The exchange of information and best practices between EU member states was started in Egmond in 2004, and was furthered in Copenhagen in 2005 and then in Berlin last February. "We need a European Action Plan for Offshore. The next step will be the Council of Energy Ministers meeting next June in Brussels", concluded Bömer.

EWEA will dedicate a four-day conference on the crucial issue of offshore wind energy in Berlin in December 2007.

Note to editors:

- For more information about EWEC 07: www.ewec2007.info
- For more information about the European Offshore Wind Conference and Exhibition in Berlin: <http://www.eow2007.info/>
- EWEA is the voice of the wind industry, actively promoting the utilisation of wind power in Europe and worldwide. It now has over 300 members from 40 countries, including manufacturers with a 98% share of the world wind power market, plus component suppliers, research institutes, national wind and renewables associations, developers, electricity providers, finance and insurance companies and consultants. This combined strength makes EWEA the world's largest and most powerful wind energy network.



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