Procedure file

Basic information

INI - Own-initiative procedure	2019/2158(INI)	Procedure completed
The impact on the fishing sector of offshore windfarms and other renewable energy systems Subject 3.15 Fisheries policy 3.60.05 Alternative and renewable energies		

Key players

European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	PECH Fisheries		19/12/2019
		VAN DALEN Peter	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		FERRANDINO Giuseppe	
		GADE Søren	
		O'SULLIVAN Grace	
		GRANT Valentino	
		RUISSEN Bert-Jan	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy		19/12/2019
		PETERSEN Morten	
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Maritime Affairs and Fisheries	SINKEVIČIUS Virginijus	

Key events

19/12/2019	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
25/05/2021	Vote in committee		
01/06/2021	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0184/2021	Summary

05/07/2021	Debate in Parliament		
06/07/2021	Results of vote in Parliament		
07/07/2021	Decision by Parliament	T9-0338/2021	Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2019/2158(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	PECH/9/01965

Documentation gateway

Committee opinion	ITRE	PE648.288	29/01/2021	EP	
Committee draft report		PE681.090	18/02/2021	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE691.184	29/03/2021	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0184/2021	01/06/2021	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0338/2021	07/07/2021	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2021)598	26/11/2021	EC	

The impact on the fishing sector of offshore windfarms and other renewable energy systems

The Committee on Fisheries adopted an own-initiative report by Peter VAN DALEN (EPP, NL) on the impact on the fishing sector of offshore wind farms and other renewable energy systems.

Long-term vision

Offshore wind turbines have an average life cycle of 25 to 30 years. Very few turbines have so far been decommissioned and recycling is still very complex with 85 to 90 % of a dismantled wind turbine being recycled. The report stressed that a long-term vision based on a circular economy and life-cycle approach is necessary in order to assess the impacts on other activities, such as fishing, and on local communities and ecosystems, at the end of the project.

The report highlighted the need to avoid the potential negative long-term impact caused by offshore wind turbines on certain ecosystems, fish stocks and biodiversity, and consequently on fisheries as a whole. It emphasised the need for a life-cycle approach to their development, from construction through operation and decommissioning, hence the importance of rigorous and detailed studies to assess the impacts of existing offshore wind turbines.

The report warned that offshore renewable energy will only be sustainable if it has no negative impact on the environment and on economic, social and territorial cohesion, especially in fisheries-dependent regions.

While stressing that renewable energy and energy efficiency are among the key drivers for reaching a net zero-emissions economy, Members highlighted that in order to meet the 2030 renewable energy target, offshore renewable electricity infrastructure capacity and production need to be increased accordingly.

The report also highlighted the important potential of renewable hydrogen, including from wind and solar energy, in reaching the Unions climate neutrality objective.

Spatial planning

Parliament called on Member States, in line with maritime spatial planning provisions, to designate specific historical and traditional fishing grounds of local fishers as areas that are to remain free of offshore renewables. The Commission and the Member States are urged to improve cross-border cooperation in maritime spatial planning, including with the United Kingdom, the largest producer of offshore wind in Europe, in order to find solutions to common problems, integrate electricity connections and learn from best practices.

Floating offshore wind devices

Members acknowledged the potential of floating offshore wind devices which create opportunities for installations in areas with deep waters, and involve greater distance from the coastline, less visual impact and less potential spatial overlap with fishing areas.

Decommissioning of offshore wind turbines

Members expressed concern about the lack of research into the decommissioning of offshore wind turbines and into the effects of decommissioning on the environment. They stressed that the decommissioning of offshore wind turbines must neither generate enduring environmental impacts or pose safety risks to fishing vessels due to any remaining sub-seabed infrastructure. Members also stressed that offshore windfarms should only be built if an integrated approach to the life-cycle processes of offshore wind turbines is taken. They urged the creation of an international standard that defines how to decommission turbines.

Furthermore, Member States are urged to:

- take into account the need to ensure that the negative effects of offshore wind turbines on fisheries are avoided and that they are therefore placed away from fishing grounds;

- take account of the impact of offshore renewable energy on the marine ecosystem and fisheries when determining their energy mix;

- continue working on the development and usage of other forms of renewable energy.

The Commission is called on to:

- assess initiatives that stimulate local economies and economic activities offshore and to find synergies between sectors that can serve as a basis for a future-proof economic recovery

- carry out further research in addition to studying the environmental impacts in order to assess the possible economic and social impacts on fisheries of investments in offshore renewables and to identify appropriate ways to overcome these negative impacts.

The impact on the fishing sector of offshore windfarms and other renewable energy systems

The European Parliament adopted, by 667 votes to 11, with 14 abstentions, a resolution on the impact on the fishing sector of offshore wind farms and other renewable energy systems.

According to the Commission's estimates, 30% of the EU's electricity demand in 2050 will be met by offshore wind energy, which means increasing the current capacity of all wind turbines in the EU-27 from 12 GW to a target of 300 GW in 2050.

The North Sea, the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic account for more than 85% of all offshore wind capacity in European waters. Other sources of offshore renewable energy, such as wave, tidal and thermal energy, floating photovoltaic installations and the use of algae to produce biofuels, could be promising in some areas and have less impact on fishing activities, fish stocks and the marine environment.

Long-term vision

Offshore wind turbines have an average life cycle of 25 to 30 years. Very few turbines have so far been decommissioned little research has been done on the dismantling of offshore wind turbines.

Parliament highlighted the need to avoid the potential negative long-term impact caused by offshore wind turbines on certain ecosystems, fish stocks and biodiversity, and consequently on fisheries as a whole. It emphasised the need for a life-cycle approach to their development, from construction through operation and decommissioning, hence the importance of rigorous and detailed studies to assess the impacts of existing offshore wind turbines.

Members warned that offshore renewable energy will only be sustainable if it has no negative impact on the environment and on economic, social and territorial cohesion, especially in fisheries-dependent regions.

While stressing that renewable energy and energy efficiency are among the key drivers for reaching a net zero-emissions economy, Members highlighted that in order to meet the 2030 renewable energy target, offshore renewable electricity infrastructure capacity and production need to be increased accordingly.

The resolution also highlighted the important potential of renewable hydrogen, including from wind and solar energy, in reaching the Unions climate neutrality objective.

Spatial planning

Parliament called on Member States, in line with maritime spatial planning provisions, to designate specific historical and traditional fishing grounds of local fishers as areas that are to remain free of offshore renewables.

In order to avoid potential territorial conflicts in some European sea basins in the coming years, Members stressed the need for early and inclusive spatial planning, both with regard to the placement and layout of offshore wind farms.

The Commission and the Member States are urged to improve cross-border cooperation in maritime spatial planning, including with the United Kingdom, the largest producer of offshore wind in Europe, in order to find solutions to common problems, integrate electricity connections and learn from best practices.

Floating offshore wind devices

Members acknowledged the potential of floating offshore wind devices which create opportunities for installations in areas with deep waters, and involve greater distance from the coastline, less visual impact and less potential spatial overlap with fishing areas.

Decommissioning of offshore wind turbines

The resolution stressed that the decommissioning of offshore wind turbines must neither generate enduring environmental impacts or pose safety risks to fishing vessels due to any remaining sub-seabed infrastructure. Members also stressed that offshore windfarms should only be

built if an integrated approach to the life-cycle processes of offshore wind turbines is taken. They urged the creation of an international standard that defines how to decommission turbines.

Furthermore, Member States are urged to:

- take into account the need to ensure that the negative effects of offshore wind turbines on fisheries are avoided and that they are therefore placed away from fishing grounds;

- take account of the impact of offshore renewable energy on the marine ecosystem and fisheries when determining their energy mix;

- continue working on the development and usage of other forms of renewable energy.

Parliament warned that offshore renewable energy will only be sustainable if it has no negative impact on the environment and on economic, social and territorial cohesion, especially in fisheries-dependent regions.

It emphasised that the precautionary principle, in accordance with Article 191(2) TFEU, should apply if decisions have to be taken before the required knowledge or information is available.