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

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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 Union’s 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.