



From conflict to coexistence: Exploring multi-use between offshore wind and small-scale fisheries in the context of the Ocean Act

Event outcomes

The event, hosted and organised by MEP Isabella Lövin (Greens/EFA Group) and co-organised by Coalition Clean Baltic and Seas At Risk provided a platform to present and discuss the opportunities, challenges, and regulatory pathways for multi-use involving offshore wind and small scale fisheries in European waters. Discussions underscored the need to strengthen alignment and coherence between EU marine environmental policies and the potential of the upcoming Ocean Act in realising this coherence. It was emphasised that, in order to achieve the objectives of restoring European seas and tackling the biodiversity and climate crises, the forthcoming Ocean Act must become a holistic, overarching framework, that combines existing EU marine environmental goals, including the goal of reaching good environmental status (GES) under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). To complement this, the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive must become a tool to achieve this coherence through stronger cross-border cooperation and a sea basin approach.

The following elements were highlighted as key components to set realistic pathways for coexistence between offshore wind energy and small-scale fisheries in the long-term, ensuring that multi-use works in practice and reduces space conflicts and the impact of human activities: strategic and joint planning at the MSP and project levels, early stakeholder engagement already from the planning phase, data and knowledge sharing, risk management, and financial incentives.

Moreover, panellists, speakers, and participants emphasised that sustainable multi-use in EU marine waters requires long-term monitoring, cumulative impact assessments and a

precautionary approach. Such elements are critical to prevent adding more anthropogenic pressures on the marine environment and allow the recovery of already compromised marine regions and ecosystems, such as the Baltic Sea.

Finally, a regional approach that takes into account differences among sea basins was also underscored as very important by the panelists. The differences in the state of the ecosystems and fish stocks between the North and Baltic Sea were specifically discussed. While a sea-basin approach is essential to ensure coherence, maintain cumulative impacts within the ecosystems carrying capacity, and share knowledge and best practices, the discussion also highlighted that cross-border cooperation must be complemented by a site-specific approach that considers local ecological, social and economic characteristics.

As highlighted by **MEP Isabella Lövin, Greens/EFA Group** in her concluding remarks: ***“We need to treat the ocean as one. A stable and healthy ocean is essential to address climate change and multi-use can potentially be one of the roads to succeed to allocate the need for multiple activities at sea. However, cumulative impact assessments are imperative to avoid further pressures on the marine environment.”***

Below you can find a summary of the main takeaways:

- Offshore wind expansion is essential to achieve climate goals and it must be developed within planetary boundaries to maintain the ocean's critical role in mitigating climate change. To this end, effective and robust cumulative impact assessments of all life-cycle stages and the avoidance of marine protected and key biodiversity areas in offshore wind deployment are critical.
- Policy coherence is key to implement successful multi-use strategies and to improve the environmental status of EU marine regions. The upcoming Ocean Act is an opportunity to realise this coherence.
- The co-location of small-scale fisheries and offshore wind should contribute to reducing conflicts and be developed within the carrying capacity of marine ecosystems.
- Environmental long-term monitoring is key to understanding the environmental impacts of multi-use and how it works in practice, as well as to promote knowledge sharing.
- Cross-border cooperation is fundamental to assess and reduce cumulative impacts, ensure coherence between national policies on multi-use and promote data and knowledge sharing, since countries have very different levels of experience with multi-use.
- Sea-basin cooperation must be complemented by a site-specific approach, where multi-use is agreed at the planning phase, considering safety, insurance, and permitting at early stages, and with the active participation of stakeholders from the start.