

VALUABLE PRACTICE: Public debates on offshore wind farms planning and MSP

Description

Public participation processes were initially conducted in parallel for OWF planning and MSP. Over the last ten years, the legal framework in France has evolved considerably to accelerate the development of OWF and to improve public participation in consultation processes.

OWF planning was roughly included in the first MSP plans, with the definition of large areas dedicated to various uses, including OWF. The consultation process on the MSP plans includes all relevant stakeholders in each sea basin council, but local citizens and local stakeholders were excluded. Consultation on OWF planning was carried out in parallel with the online national consultation on energy policy and a local public debate in relation to each OWF project. As a result of the new legislations (2018, 2020, 2023), local stakeholders and citizens should be involved in the planning of OWF in MSP plans through a single, joint public debate at a regional scale (sea basin - "maritime façade").

This public debate will take place in autumn 2023 and will provide a vision of OWF development over the next 10 years in terms of location and installed capacity (number of GW per sea basin). The social acceptability of OWF development is not guaranteed despite the improvement in public participation in OWF planning. A participatory process at regional level is not enough. Local deliberative arenas are still lacking to build the energy transition with local stakeholders and citizens.

Practice typology

(iii) Process-related practice + (iv) zoning

Topics addressed

Main	G. Fair and just transition [G.1. Stakeholder participation and G.2. Representativeness of diversity of stakeholders at different levels]
Secondary	A. Climate change mitigation [A.1. Renewable energy production, storage and transportation (A.1.1 Development of marine renewable energy installations)]

Sectors/Activity involved

Offshore renewable energy

Stakeholders involved

The stakeholders involved in the OWF planning are as follow:

National level

State authorities:

- Ministry of environment (General Directorate of Water and Climate): regulation, definition of installed capacity targets for each sea basin ("façade"), launch of calls for tenders, in charge of OWF planning
- Ministry of the Sea (General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture): regulation, in charge of marine spatial planning

Independent authority:

- National and local commission dedicated to public debate: in charge of organising the public debate at national and local scale

State public institutions:

- CEREMA: in charge of assessing offshore wind energy potential at a national level (mapping, etc.), contribution to public debate with mapping inputs
- RTE (public industrial operator in charge of energy transportation in France): contributing in public debate as project owner; implementation (responsible for connecting OWF to onshore electricity transmission networks).

State research institutes:

- Ocean renewable energy developers (EDF, Iberdrola, etc.): contribution to public debate as project owner.

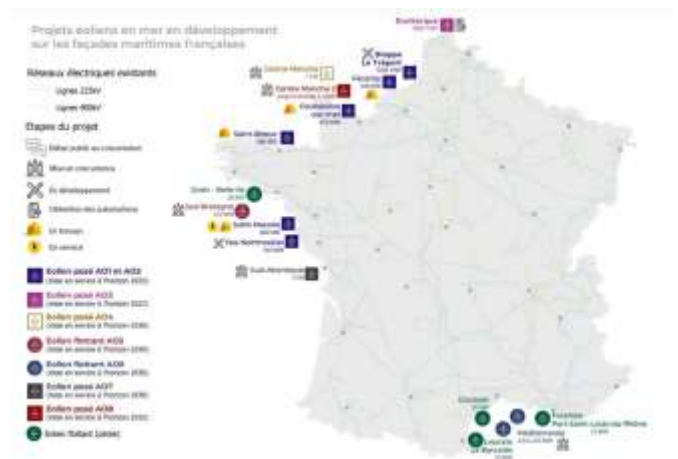
Regional level

- Maritime Sea basins Councils: consultation institution dedicated to the MSP process, bringing together stakeholders from the maritime economy sector (public agencies, professional stakeholders (fisheries, energy, etc.), trade unions, environmental NGOs).
- Regional municipalities: political lobby in public debate.
- DREAL (regional environmental authority): contribution to the public debate with environmental input, assessment of EIA carried out by OWF project owner.

Local level

- Local municipalities: political lobby in public debate.
- Citizens: consultation.
- NGOs: consultation.

Geographical scope



Map of OWF projects in the 4 French Sea Basins [Source](#)

Governance context

The first public debates on OWF projects were heavily criticised by stakeholders and local citizens: (i) lack of long-term planning for offshore wind energy (site-by-site planning), (ii) OWF projects are already pre-defined and pre-established (the public debate took place after the OWF developer had been selected, with no possibility of changing the location), (iii) lack of environmental data on the environmental impacts of OWF projects, (iv) lack of a participatory process for involving the local public in energy policy choices.

In response to these criticisms, three laws came out. The first in 2018 (ESSOC law) modified the place of the public debate in the process of implementation OWF projects. Public consultation must take place before the selection of OWF developer. As a result, the projects discussed in public debate are less predefined and less mature than before. The other two laws have enabled a shared and joint public debate between OWF planning and MSP: (i) the ASAP law (2020) allows for public consultation to define multiple OWF location on a regional scale ("maritime façade" - sea basin); the APER law (2023) allows for a single public debate on a regional scale for OWF planning in MSP, as part of the ongoing review of MSP plans.

Nowadays the consultation processes for OWF planning and MSP have been brought together in a single public debate. According to the new laws, local stakeholders and citizens should be involved in the planning of OWF in MSP plans through a single, joint public



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debate at regional scale (sea basin - "maritime façade"). This public debate will take place between December 2023 and June 2024.

How this MSP practice can support the EU Green Deal

This practice supports the following aspects of EGD:

- A.1. Development of marine renewable energy installations by the acceleration of OWF deployment and through the adaptation of the legal framework in order to promote the implementation and acceptability of this new industry.
- G. Fair and just transition objectives such as G.1. Stakeholder participation and
- G.2. Representativeness of diversity of stakeholders at different levels.

This case study provides an overview of changes in consultation processes about OWF in France during the last 10 years. The forthcoming public debate on OWF planning into the MSP is expected to give local stakeholders and citizens more visibility at a regional level on the development of OWF over the next 10 years. During the debate, public is invited to express their visions on the precise location of offshore wind farms. The recent legislative developments have as main objective to increase the social acceptability of OWF, in order to meet national and European objectives concerning energy transition.

Challenges/gaps/inconsistencies still to be addressed

Despite the alignment of public participation between wind OWF planning and MSP plans, challenges remain in terms of public inclusion. The next ten years of OWF planning have only one public debate scheduled thus there is no new public debate for each OWF project. This is questionable in terms of local citizens and stakeholders inclusion in project. In addition, a common criticism raised during every OWF public debate still goes unanswered: is the lack of local public participation in the area of energy policy. The track of public debates since the beginning of the history of OWF in France shows that local stakeholders and local citizens want to discuss their energy future locally (what type of energy sources? where?) but that such local arenas for discussion do not exist. It could be useful to create such deliberative arenas in which the future of local energy will co-decide between local community and public authorities, in relation to MSP and land use planning.

Replicability /Elements which can be capitalised

- ✓ A participatory online mapping tool: In order to feed discussions and promote the inclusion of all stakeholders in debates, public agencies (e.g. CEREMA) have developed an online mapping platform for public debates as part of the development of an OWF project in the Normandie region (<https://cerema.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=199c7945c2154a24bfd8a28ee3bbd254>). Using this tool, participants into public debate defined scenarios for the location of OWF sites and OWF-free zoning, based on real data (maritime traffic, fishing zones, environmental data, etc.).

Pros: Building capacity of participants into public debate; as participants become the planners and have to deal with constraints.
Cons: non-use or limited use of the results of participatory mapping in decision-making.

- ✓ An example of public consultation in Mediterranean: Since 2013, EDF (a public electricity production company) has been developing a floating OWF project (Provence Grand Large), without having a pre-defined project by State's authorities nor a call for tenders. In the first stage of the project, EDF initiated a 2-year consultation process during which stakeholders and developers co-decided the perimeter of the OWF site (even if

the fishers had the strongest opinion on the subject). The stakeholders involved were citizens, NGOs, State authorities, fishers (and their representatives), MPA managers, ports, etc.

Pros: This public consultation is a good example for the inclusion of stakeholders from the very early stage of OWF project. It has created an arena that brings together stakeholders who were not previously talking to each other. The debate/exchanges conducted between stakeholders, reduced the conflicts and allowed everyone's opinions to be considered thus simplifying project development.

Cons: This type of consultation demands substantial human and financial resources and takes a long time to carry out. Planning aims to improve and to streamline consultation processes.

Despite the contribution of this consultation process, the acceptability of OWF projects on the Mediterranean sea basin remains a challenge, as the choice of OWF in energy policy has not been discussed locally.