MEETING DOCUMENT

**Task Group Management (TG-M 22-1)**

17 January 2022

Online meeting

**Agenda Item: 5. Renewable Energy**

**Subject: Draft TOR ad hoc Working Group**

**Document No.:** TG-M 22-1/5

**Date:** 12 January 2022

**Submitted by: Ad hoc working group ‘Cables and Pipelines’ (ad hoc WG-CP)**

In the LD, para 29, the following was agreed: *“Instruct the Wadden Sea Board to review and monitor the impacts of renewable energy production and energy transportation on the Wadden Sea ecosystem and to consider measures to avoid or mitigate possible negative impacts by looking for best environmental practices also with the aim of developing, for example, related common principles to evaluate the impact of high-voltage power cables in the Wadden Sea Area in close consultation with the responsible bodies and stakeholders”.*

Some steps to fulfil this task have already been taken since the TGC 2018: Review and monitoring of impacts were addressed in the context of the drafting process for the single integrated management plan for the Wadden Sea World Heritage and the thematic report on energy in the framework of the Quality Status Report, both currently nearing finalisation. Considering measures to avoid or mitigate possible negative impacts lies in trilateral conservation and sustainability interests and is driven by current trends to speed and scale up strategic energy transportation plans and projects. What is mainly lacking in this respect, is a more in-depth trilateral focus and exchange on future high voltage power grid and pipeline crossings of the Wadden Sea.

Given the urgency to fulfil this request from the ministers within less than one year left to the next TGC by the end of 2022, TG-M 21-5 (17.12.2021) decided upon a written proposal from group members from NL and DE to install an ad hoc working group under TG-M to tackle these implementation deficits of the LD as far and pragmatic as possible. In the TG-M 21-5 proposal, a background description of the trilateral challenges is given. Now, draft terms of reference incl. membership for this ad hoc group are herewith suggested to the TG-M 22-1 meeting (17.01.2022).

It is reminded, that ad hoc groups do not have the same requirements and status as other formal working groups (TGs, EGs, NGs), see doc. WSB-28-7-1-1, p. 2: (ad hoc) Working Groups are installed by TGs for elaborating on a certain aspect of issues targeted in the corresponding TG. WGs report to the TGs; are chaired by CWSS staff or group member; are temporary.

**Proposal:** The group is invited to agree on the draft terms of reference, select a chair to the group and to name members to the group.

**Ad hoc working group “Cables and Pipelines” (ad hoc WG-CP)**

**Draft Terms of Reference**

# **Background**

Due to its geographical location in the southern North Sea between the areas of offshore renewable energy production and the main consumption centres in the inland, the trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation Area is a crossing and landing area for high-voltage subsea cable systems and gas pipelines intended to transport energy with an accelerating growing trend towards 2030 and beyond. In the course of the further decarbonisation of the energy sector, also new technologies are being developed that would require pipeline infrastructure to transport hydrogen or carbon dioxide (Carbon Capture and Storage in the North Sea). In addition, Power to X plants may be established in connection with so-called “energy islands” in the North Sea. Products from these plants may be brought ashore in pipelines, too.

Aware of the environmental risk this development might pose to the Wadden Sea ecosystem, it was already addressed by the Ministers in the Tonder Declaration 2014 and agreed in the Leeuwarden Declaration 2018, para 29, to: *“Instruct the Wadden Sea Board to review and monitor the impacts of renewable energy production and energy transportation on the Wadden Sea ecosystem and to consider measures to avoid or mitigate possible negative impacts by looking for best environmental practices also with the aim of developing, for example, related common principles to evaluate the impact of high-voltage power cables in the Wadden Sea Area in close consultation with the responsible bodies and stakeholders”.*

# Some steps to fulfil this task have already been taken since the TGC 2018: Review and monitoring of impacts in the context of the drafting process for the single integrated management plan for the Wadden Sea World Heritage (SIMP) and the update of the thematic report on energy in the framework of the Quality Status Report, both currently nearing finalisation. For further information see draft SIMP plus background papers (risk assessment), draft QSR thematic report on energy and <https://northsearegion.eu/northsee/e-energy/>.

# Considering measures to avoid or mitigate possible negative impacts lies in mutual trilateral conservation and sustainability interests. What is still lacking, is a more in-depth trilateral nature conservation and sustainability focus and exchange on strategic grid planning, route selection and fine routing, laying and maintenance of future high voltage power grid and pipeline crossings of the Wadden Sea including cumulative effects.

On the implementation level, all countries will run to similar problems. There is a risk of different implementation of the mitigation and compensation measures from the bird and habitats directive[[1]](#footnote-1). Also, they are not at similar starting points. Germany has various, spatially defined energy corridors and is experienced with landing high voltage power cables. In the Netherlands discussions are ongoing, whereas scientific advisers have different views on routing than partially applied in Lower Saxony or Schleswig-Holstein. Denmark expects no more landing of electricity in the near future, but is looking for Germany and Netherlands to further implement North Sea wind energy cooperation. Innovations (such as 2GW cables) might be tried within one country whereas lessons learned can be applied within a broader context. Finally, UNESCO has, as part of the passive monitoring of World Heritage, announced their concerns in this regard.

The ad-hoc working group reports to the TG-M.

# **Objective**

The objective of the ad hoc working group is to tackle implementation deficits of No.29, LD as far and pragmatic as possible in due time for the Wadden Sea Conference Nov 2022. It will build on the work done for the draft QSR thematic chapter energy and will serve as a good first topic to try to make parts of the draft SIMP chapter on energy operational.

**Tasks**

1. Exchange on existing information on potential impacts from impact assessments and effect monitoring on high-voltage subsea cables and gas pipelines
2. Exchange on existing information on alternative solution and mitigation concepts and best practise at different stages: strategic grid planning, spatial planning, project permission and implementation incl. maintenance.
3. Advise/support harmonisation and best practice implementing Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
4. Identify open questions for effect monitoring and applied research
5. Explore potential future roles of the TWSC in the context of North-Sea-wide grid planning and transnational routing.

**Deliverables to TG-M**

1. Overview report on impact assessments and effect monitoring
2. Best practice report on mitigation concepts and measures (tool box), incl. trilateral stakeholder workshop
3. Recommendations to further harmonisation and best practise implementing Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
4. List of open questions for effect monitoring and applied research
5. Recommendations on future role and approach of TWSC towards North-Sea-wide grid planning and transnational routing.

**Composition/Membership**

1 member per region (DK, SH, LS, NL), external experts and stakeholder representatives from the energy sector might be invited as guests, when appropriate.

The ad hoc group is chaired by one group member, selected by the group.

**Time schedule**

Jan 2022 – Dec 2022

1. Page 52 ; [EN.pdf (europa.eu)](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/pdf/methodological-guidance_2021-10/EN.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)