



Vides pārraudzības valsts birojs

Environment State Bureau of the Republic of Latvia

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Riga

19.12.2024 No. 5-05/1421/2024

Ref. to: 22.10.2024 No 6-3/24/4624-2

The Ministry of Climate of the Republic of Estonia

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Regarding the environmental impact assessment of the planned offshore wind farm in the Area Saare 2.1 and Saare 2.2 in the Baltic Sea (the developer Deep Wind Offshore)

The Environment State Bureau (hereinafter – the Bureau), acting as a Point of Contact regarding Notification in accordance with Article 3 of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (hereinafter – the Espoo Convention) of Latvia and the competent authority on the environmental impact assessment (hereinafter – the EIA) in Latvia, would like to express gratitude to the Ministry of Climate of the Republic of Estonia for the Notification regarding the planned offshore wind farm in Area Saare 2.1 and Saare 2.2 in the Baltic Sea (hereinafter – the Project) with reference to Article 3 of the Espoo Convention.

The Bureau hereby acknowledges the receipt of the notification and documentation¹. Considering the nature and scope of the Project and the possibility of transboundary impacts, we hereby confirm that Latvia intends to take part in the proceedings on the EIA and transboundary consultations of the Project as an affected party.

Please be informed that the Bureau published received information regarding the Project on Bureau's webpage² on 31 October 2024 and sent information directly to the involved authorities. The Bureau received opinions regarding the Project and its potential transboundary impacts within the scope of competence from the Ministry of Climate and Energy of the Republic of Latvia, the

¹ Received on 22 October 2024, registration no 5-05/2913/2024.

²<https://www.vpvb.gov.lv/lv/parrobezu-ietekmes-uz-vidi-novertejumu-projekti/par-ietekmes-uz-vidi-novertejumu-igaunijas-atkrastes-veja-elektrostaciju-parkam-21-un-22-apgabala-baltijas-jura>

Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia, the Nature Conservation Agency, the State Environmental Service, the Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology, the Kurzeme Planning Region, the Ventspils State City municipality. The Bureau has not received comments from the public.

Below mentioned authorities highlighted aspects that need to be stressed and foreseen in the transboundary EIA of the Project or provided more detailed comments regarding transboundary impact:

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Latvia assumes that the Project will not have a direct impact on the territory of the Republic of Latvia in terms of human health.

According to the information provided in the Annexes of the Notification, the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia concluded that wind turbines are planned to be located on / or very close to the border of offshore wind farm sites (see Figure 5 of the Annex 2, page 17 and Figure 5 Annex 3 page 17 of the Notification). The planned offshore wind farm in the area Saare 2.1 is located close to the ship transit route from Latvian waters to the Gulf of Finland (see Figure 8 of the Annex 2, page 27 and Figure 8 of the Annex 3, page 28 of the Notification). At the same time, these images show a large area in Estonian waters as a wind energy development area, with no indication of shipping lanes or areas reserved for shipping through this area. Considering mentioned, the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia invites to assess not only the impact on shipping traffic and conduct a cumulative impact study on shipping corridors (as mentioned in the studies outlined in Annexes 4 and 5 of the Notification), but also to mark areas reserved for shipping in the Baltic Sea, which would ensure optimal ship transit traffic from Latvian waters and ports to the Gulf of Finland. The areas reserved for shipping in Estonian waters should be connected to existing corridors reserved for shipping in Latvian waters.

The Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia kindly asks to ensure that the safety zone around the fixed structures of the offshore wind farm, including wind turbines and sub-stations, referred to in Article 60 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), does not extend beyond the area provided for the offshore wind farm.

In the document “White Paper on Offshore Wind Energy”, available at the Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) website, it is recommended to establish a safety distance between the shipping lanes and the wind farm of 2 nautical miles. The Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia proposes to consider a possibility to take this recommendation into account and to establish a safety zone of 2 nautical miles between shipping corridor and offshore wind farm.

The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia would like to inform that within the scope of its competence the Ministry has become acquainted with the information provided by the Ministry of Climate of the Republic of Estonia regarding the Project, which could also affect the interests of Latvian fishermen because they use the same fish resources, and believes that it would be useful for the Republic of Latvia to participate in the transboundary EIA procedure.

In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Latvia notes that Decision No 1-07/24-321 of the Consumer Rights Protection and Technical supervision Agency of the Republic of Estonia of 18 September 2024 *on the initiation of the EIA procedure* and Decision No 1-07/24-329 of the Consumer Rights Protection and Technical supervision Agency of the Republic of Estonia of 24 September 2024 *on the initiation of the EIA procedure* includes sufficiently detailed

information on planned studies within EIA of the Project related to fish resources.

The Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia has become acquainted with the documents and informs that, in its opinion, when assessing the distance of the planned construction site of the wind farm from the State border of Latvia and its potential impact on the natural values detected in the marine area, there is a need to engage in procedures for the assessment of transboundary environmental impact. The Ministry is interested to receive information regarding the results of the assessments, especially regarding the data of the marine space, which would be useful for the intended updating process of the Maritime Spatial Plan 2030 of Latvia³ (hereinafter – the Maritime Spatial Plan), and adverse transboundary impact, in case it is detected during the EIA. The Ministry informs that in the LIFE19 NAT/LV/000973 REEF “Research of marine protected habitats in EEZ and determination of the necessary conservation status in Latvia” project (led by the Nature Conservation Agency, still ongoing this year) aerial surveys of birds, as well as underwater research (habitats, fish etc.) were carried out in the marine waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Latvia, next to the development area of the planned offshore wind farm. Data collected in the REEF project shows various natural values (birds, protected habitats etc.) near the Project area. Therefore, the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia considers that a transboundary EIA should be carried out.

The Nature Conservation Agency (hereinafter – the Agency) as the competent nature protection institution of the Republic of Latvia draws attention to the following:

1. The planned wind farms are located approximately 60 km from the land border of the Republic of Latvia (Ovišu Cape) and approximately 31 km from the *Natura 2000* protected marine area “Irbes šaurums” (LV0900300)⁴, which was created for the protection of birds (*Gavia stellata*, *Gavia arctica*, *Melanitta fusca*, *Melanitta nigra*, *Clangula hyemalis*, *Larus minutus*, *Cephus grylle*), therefore it is mandatory to assess the potential impact of the wind farms on the *Natura 2000* area.
2. According to the information available to the Agency, the Republic of Estonia has initiated EIA procedures for several offshore wind farms^{5,6} in the Baltic Sea, therefore the EIA report should assess the cumulative impact of the wind farms planned in the region on the biodiversity of the Baltic Sea. Particular attention should be paid to bird wintering sites and migration routes, as well as additional consideration should be given to biodiversity research areas. The Agency indicates that, in cooperation with partners, it has initiated research in the waters of the Latvian Exclusive Economic Zone with the aim of creating a new protected marine *Natura 2000* area (within the framework of the LIFE REEF⁷ project).
3. The areas of the planned wind farms also potentially overlap with important bird migration and wintering areas. Since these areas are located outside Latvia, the Agency does not have direct information about them, however, recommends conducting comprehensive studies during the bird migration period. Wintering bird censuses in Estonia and Latvia⁸ are carried out according

³ Approved by Cabinet of Ministers order No 232 of 21 May 2019, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/306969-par-juras-planojumu-latvijas-republikas-ieksejiem-juras-udeniem-teritorialajai-jurai-un-ekskluzivas-ekonomiskas-zonas>

⁴ Irbes šaurums (LV0900300) NATURA 2000 - STANDARD DATA FORM

<https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/Natura2000/SDF.aspx?site=LV0900300>

⁵ Global Offshore Renewables Map <https://map.4coffshore.com/offshorewind/>

⁶ Maa-amet 2024 Tarbijakaitse ja Tehnilise Järelevalve Amet

<https://xgis.maaamet.ee/xgis2/page/app/TTJAhoonestusload>

⁷ The Project “Research of marine protected habitats in EEZ and determination of the necessary conservation status in Latvia” LIFE19 NAT/LV/000973 LIFE REEF <https://reef.daba.gov.lv/public/eng/>

⁸ Monitoring reports of waterbirds wintering in the sea 2016-2024. https://www.daba.gov.lv/lv/biologiskas-daudzveidibas-monitoringa-parskati#Jura_ziemojošo_ūdensputnu_monitorings

to a common methodology, therefore, data on wintering bird density patterns are available, which should be taken into account when assessing the impacts of the Project and preparing the EIA report.

4. The EIA report must assess the potential impact of the construction and operation of the interconnection on migratory and wintering birds, as well as bird feeding habitats.
5. The Agency asks that cartographic material, including geospatial data, indicating all existing and planned wind farms in the region be attached to the EIA report. The Agency kindly asks to indicate scientific names of species in Latin, and to add geospatial data to the cartographic material of the EIA report.

The State Environmental Service, after evaluating the submitted information, concludes that the Project area is located at a distance of approximately 40 km from the Latvian coast (and nearest residential houses in Ventspils municipality), and approximately 20 km from the border of the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Latvia, as well as approximately 25 km from the specially protected nature area (including *Natura 2000*) the protected marine area “Irbe Strait”, which has been recognised as a significant location for cross border birds. The planned offshore wind farm might not be visible from the Latvian coast.

The State Environmental Service concludes that the planned changes – construction of large wind farm could also affect sea territories located in the Republic of Latvia and the Exclusive Economic Zone. Consequently, the State Environmental Service considers that Latvia should participate in transboundary consultations, as an affected party.

The State Environmental Service sees the need to evaluate the Project also in the context of the national level long-term territory development planning document the Maritime Spatial Plan and in the following planning and evaluation to pay special attention to the effects on birds and bats (including for the study of their migration routes), fish and marine mammals (including for the study of their feeding and breeding places), as well as in research to find the best/most sparing technical solutions (alternatives) for minimizing negative impacts and possible accident risks. The State Environmental Service also asks to evaluate the current practice in preventing pollution risks (with oil products, etc.) in the sea waters of wind farms during construction and operation, setting appropriate guidelines for the implementation of projects, it would also be necessary to evaluate the risks and consequences of planned infrastructure, incl. in case of malicious damage.

The Kurzeme Planning Region concludes that Latvia, as an affected country under the Espoo Convention, must participate in the transboundary consultation procedure, as the Project is planned nearby of the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Latvia in the Baltic Sea and is likely to have an impact on the territory of the Republic of Latvia.

The Kurzeme Planning Region considers that during the EIA process it is necessary to assess:

1. the assessment of the potential cumulative (including transboundary) impacts of the offshore wind farm of Saare 2.1 and Saare 2.2 on the Baltic Sea territory and marine waters.
2. the direct and long-term impacts of the Project on the areas of national defence and national security interests of the Republic of Latvia.
3. the potential risks and impacts on the existing Marine Protected Area and *Natura 2000* site “Irbe Strait”.
4. potential risks and impacts on the potential biodiversity research area (B5) “Zēģelnieku Sēklis” identified in the Latvian Marine Spatial Plan and currently being analysed as part of the LIFE REEF project.

5. the potential risks and impacts on the current safety of shipping, shipping zones and regimes in the Baltic Sea, accessibility to/from Latvian harbours.
6. the potential pollution risks of the marine waters, fish and bird populations, marine mammals during the construction and operation of the offshore wind farm.

The Ventspils State City municipality, considering that the Project may have indirect effects on the Latvian coast, as well as on the realization of the planned offshore and onshore wind farm development projects in the territory of Latvia has opinion that the Republic of Latvia should participate in the process of transboundary consultation of the EIA of the Project.

Looking forward to a constructive and effective bilateral cooperation in the transboundary context.

Yours sincerely,

Daiga Avdejanova (*signature**) Director of Environment State Bureau of the Republic of Latvia

**Document is signed with secure electronical signature and contains a time stamp*

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