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Romanian drive gets new roadmap steer

World Bank study plots path to 3GW minimum online by 2035, writes **Daniel Dawson**

Romanian officials have announced an offshore wind roadmap outlining how the south-east European country could develop between 3GW (five projects) and 7GW (seven projects) of capacity by 2035.

The World Bank, which published the study, says Romania's Black Sea coast boasts 22GW of fixed-bottom and 54GW of floating potential.

Energy Minister Sebastian-Ioan Burduja said Romania has already adopted Law 121/2024, which "creates a solid legal foundation" for the sector's development.

The Ministry is currently studying how it will award maritime concessions to developers. The government anticipates approving selected offshore wind areas by the end of March 2025, with the first developments generating electricity by 2032.

Black Sea Oil & Gas is reportedly among those interested in submitting a bid. The independent Romanian energy company has completed a feasibility study to develop 3GW of offshore wind to connect to the grid.

Officials must now set up the appropriate financing mechanism to facilitate the development of ancillary infrastructure.

The World Bank study indicated that Romania would likely need to expand grid infrastructure beyond its current plans to accommodate the low-growth scenario.

Along with electrical generation, the Energy Ministry is also studying the potential of offshore wind to produce

green hydrogen to fuel domestic industry and possibly export.

Elsewhere in the Black Sea, progress remains stalled in Bulgaria. An offshore wind bill submitted to parliament in 2023 was withdrawn after strong criticism from the tourism and fishery sectors.

According to the World Bank, Bulgaria's Black Sea coastline boasts 2GW of fixed-bottom and 24GW of floating offshore wind potential.

Advocates point out three potential sites outside fisheries, maritime traffic lanes and defence exclusion zones. However, water depths mean floating solutions would be needed.

To that end, gas company Petroceltic is working with several European partners to develop a pilot floating project inside its gas concession area, 25km from Varna.

The company plans to install a self-orienting 5MW turbine designed by Eolink. The goal is to achieve a levelised cost of electricity of less than €87 per megawatt-hour by 2028. If this comes to fruition, Petroceltic aims to scale the development to 450MW.

Despite fighting a war against neighbouring Russia, Ukraine continues to move ahead with its offshore wind ambitions along the northern coast of the Black Sea. In mid-August, the government set a target to develop 100MW of capacity by 2030. The World Bank considers Ukraine's Black Sea coastline could offer 183GW of fixed-bottom and 68GW of floating offshore wind potential. ■



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Azerbaijan sizes green energy export corridor

Azerbaijan has identified offshore wind as a key component of plans to boost renewable energy capacity and export clean energy to the European Union via a proposed green energy corridor.

The government has initiated studies of the Caspian Sea to identify areas for development in zones with water depths less than 50 metres, and wind measurement campaigns are also underway.

Memoranda of understanding have been signed between state oil and gas company Socar and Masdar for up to 8GW of offshore wind and green hydrogen in two phases, and

between the Ministry of Energy and ACWA Power for 1.5GW of offshore wind and battery storage capacity.

The overall aim is to bring the first projects online in 2030 and export the energy to Europe through a Caspian-EU green energy corridor.

The government has established a joint venture with Georgia, Romania and Hungary to develop a 1200km-long link between the Caspian region to the EU via the Black Sea. A feasibility study has started and is expected to be completed by early 2025 at the latest, with both electricity transmission and hydrogen pipeline infrastructure under consideration.

A link to Europe via Turkey is also being examined, as is another to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to extend the corridor east.

Observers note that although Azerbaijan's offshore wind potential has been estimated at 157GW – including 35GW in shallower waters – the country faces several challenges in getting the sector off the ground.

These include the logistics of the supply chain, in particular transporting blades and other large pieces of equipment to the Caspian, and working around existing oil and gas infrastructure and shipping requirements. ■