International initiative to strengthen Danish offshore wind sector

The initiative is to improve opportunities for an international network of companies and universities in relation to installation, operation and maintenance of offshore wind turbines

The EU has pledged to provide around €1.9 million for the national innovation network Offshore Center Danmark to be used for a new 3-year project called ECOWindS. The project will gather knowledge of installation, operation and maintenance of offshore wind farms in the UK, Germany, Denmark and Norway with the aim of halving operation and maintenance costs.

Peter Blach, Offshore Center Danmark’s director, explains: “The North Sea region is the global centre for development of offshore wind projects. The North Sea was where the first, large offshore wind projects took shape and where producers, suppliers and consultants have gathered their experiences. The North Sea has become the world’s hotspot for offshore wind technology, and a record number of new projects are being prepared. This is why we’ve taken the initiative to establish a cross-national development project focusing on how the offshore wind sector can best do research into and develop methods for installation, operation and maintenance of offshore wind turbines. The aim is to drive down costs related to operation of offshore wind farms and provide cheaper power for consumers.”

He adds: “Through our own, international events and participation in cross-national projects, we’ve already built up a significant network involving several hundred of the offshore sector’s Danish players, and ECOWindS will help us build on that on the international scene. I’m convinced that this project will help us create many new jobs in the sector.”

Opens the way for new methods

The biggest challenge faced when establishing offshore wind turbines is that they are harder to install and maintain than onshore turbines. This makes it complicated to produce power at competitive prices, which is why there is a desire in the international offshore wind sector to reduce costs.

The project involves Offshore Center Danmark collaborating with European partners about strengthening the bonds between research and the offshore sector. In this way the project is to pave the way for new research and knowledge of how costs related to installation, operation and maintenance of offshore wind turbines can be driven down, which is to result in lower and competitive prices. The project is also to ensure the survival of many small and medium-size companies and strengthen European competitiveness in the market for offshore wind turbines.

The ECOWindS project has been developed in collaboration with partners from the Technical University of Denmark and Aalborg University, and Offshore Center Danmark has also
collaborated closely with the South Denmark European Office with a particular view to developing Esbjerg and the rest of Denmark as a centre for the offshore sector. Furthermore, 4 partners from Germany, the UK and Norway are taking part in the project, which is managed by Offshore Center Danmark.

Morten Østergaard, Danish Minister for Science, Innovation and Higher Education, explains: "I'm very pleased that the EU is giving Offshore Center Danmark this support for international collaboration; this shows that, in Denmark, we've competences of the highest international standard in offshore wind energy, which Danish knowledge institutions and companies can draw on in their development work."

**Projects worth € 13.5 million**
The pledge of support for ECOWindS comes after Offshore Center Danmark was awarded the Cluster Management Excellence Gold Level, which is the EU’s most prestigious award for the most well-run networking organisation in Europe.

Offshore Center Danmark has also been promised support for a series of other projects in the offshore sector, which means the total sum for projects in 2012 amounts to more than € 13.5 million. The Danish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education has selected Offshore Center Danmark as the national innovation network for the offshore sector.