

## Offshore wind energy in the Belgian part of the North Sea: up to 4,000 MW by 2024

### 1999-2019: from 0 to 2,300 MW offshore wind energy in the Belgian North Sea

Development of the offshore wind industry in Belgium is the result of visionary Belgian industrialists and of decisive and stable policy making. From 1999 until today, this policy has created legislative certainty for the development of offshore wind energy, which is an essential condition for attracting these risky multi-billion investments.

In 2009, the six first C-Power wind turbines started producing electricity on the Thorntonbank. Ten years later, **1,556 MW** of climate-neutral production capacity is available in the Belgian North Sea, putting our country in the top four in Europe.

Offshore wind energy technology has developed at a rapid pace. In 2009, a 3 MW wind turbine was the norm. This year 9 MW wind turbines are being installed in the Belgian North Sea. Today, the construction of offshore wind farms is four times faster than it was 10 years ago. As a result, the cost of offshore wind energy has fallen rapidly in recent years and become one of the most competitive energy technologies. By **2020**, eight wind farms in the Belgian North Sea will together produce **2,300 MW of offshore wind energy**, which will be able to produce an average annual **8 TWh**, or approximately **10%** of Belgium's total electricity demand.

The BOP is calling for **legislative certainty** for first generation wind farms (from 2009 to 2019) to be protected by not imposing new policies on existing farms that could jeopardise these multi-billion investments.

### 2019-2024: offshore wind industry ready to accelerate and contribute on a large scale to carbon-neutral electricity production in Belgium

Now that offshore wind energy is a mature and cost-efficient technology, and given the urgent need to make electricity generation carbon neutral, **accelerated deployment** of new offshore wind capacity in the North Sea is an absolute must. Furthermore, continuity in the development of local projects is essential for Belgian companies to maintain their lead in the international offshore wind energy market.

The Michel government has designated new zones for 2,000 MW offshore wind energy in the 2020-2026 Marine Spatial Plan and has also approved the blueprint for the new allocation process. This new process would be completed only by the end of 2022, which would allow the new capacity to be allocated in 2023 at the earliest. In the 2020-2030 Federal Development Plan, the grid operator states that the connection of the new offshore capacity can be guaranteed only by 2026-2028.

The BOP is asking the federal government to speed up implementation of the competitive tendering process. The BOP is also requesting that the authorisation procedures necessary to reinforce the high-voltage grid can be simplified and accelerated so that the grid operator can provide a connection guarantee in good time. Basically, BOP is asking that the tendering process for offshore wind energy be published in 2020 and that the grid connection for 2,000 MW be guaranteed by 2023-2024.