

The Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy approved by Cabinet Decision no. 19/2025 of 7 February

Cabinet Decision no. 19/2025 approves the Allocation Plan for Offshore Renewable Energy, which seeks to exploit wind energy along the Portuguese coast and achieve energy independence, transition and sustainability.

ANA LUÍSA GUIMARÃES

Partner, Public Law and Regulated Sectors Area, Gómez-Acebo & Pombo

JOANA ARAGÃO SEIA

Lawyer, Public Law and Regulated Sectors Area, Gómez-Acebo & Pombo

Cabinet Decision no. 19/2025, of 7 February 2025, marks a significant step in defining the future of offshore renewable energy in Portugal.

With the approval of the Allocation Plan for Offshore Renewable Energy (PAER), the government is demonstrating its clear intention to

structure the use of the sea's energy potential, with an emphasis on wind energy.

The Plan identifies areas for the exploitation of renewable energy (distributed over Viana do Castelo, Leixões, Figueira da Foz and Sines), which cover 2711.6 km², including a specific area of 5.6 km² at Aguçadoura, intended for the installation of non-commercial research or

demonstration projects. This definition represents a reduction of 470 km² compared to the proposal submitted for public discussion, reflecting an effort to make it compatible with other maritime activities. These areas will make it possible to achieve an installed capacity for commercial projects of around 9.4 GW, consolidating a strategic energy corridor along the Portuguese coast.

The use of these areas for commercial projects will be carried out through government-initiated procedures, as established in Article 64 of Decree-law no. 38/2015 of 12 March, in its current wording. This legal framework aims to ensure transparency and competitiveness in concession procedures, boosting the attraction of private investment.

The PAER is Portugal's strategic response to the new international energy paradigm and is structured around five strategic objectives aimed not only at strengthening the country's energy independence, but also at boosting the blue economy and safeguarding marine ecosystems:

1. National Energy Independence and Energy Autonomy from the European Union (SO1)

Seeks to reduce Portugal's energy dependence, which has fluctuated between 76.1% and 65.8% over the last decade, by promoting the development of renewable ocean energy with a production capacity of up to 10 GW. This goal is in line with the National Energy and Climate Plan (PNEC 2030) and aims to mitigate the external vulnerability resulting from fluctuations in the fossil fuel markets. However, in order to achieve this autonomy, it will be necessary to tackle infrastructure and investment challenges, including adapting the electricity grid and attracting capital for large-scale projects.

2. Energy Transition and Decarbonization of the Economy (SO2)

Puts Portugal on the road to climate neutrality by 2045, contributing to the global goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees, in accordance with the Paris Agreement. Through the development of offshore renewable energy, the PAER aims to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, this transition is not without obstacles, namely the need to adapt existing energy infrastructure and ensure grid stability in the face of intermittency of renewable energy.

3. Sustainable Development of the Blue Economy and Offshore Renewable Energy (SO3)

Aims to promote strategic industrial sectors such as metallurgy and electromechanics, stimulating the creation of new jobs and the provision of specialist courses for professionals. The installation of floating-technology offshore wind farms not only promises to boost the economy, but also to position Portugal as a leader in the renewable ocean energy sector. However, the success of this objective will depend on the ability to create synergies with other maritime activities, such as fishing and tourism, avoiding conflicts in the use of maritime space.

4. National Production of New Clean Fuels, such as Hydrogen (SO4)

Proposes the development of "green" hydrogen from renewable sources, including production at sea through the electrolysis of saline water. This push in favour of hydrogen aims to reduce dependence on natural gas and create jobs in the green economy. However, the economic viability of this technolo-

gy still depends on advances in electrolysis efficiency and the reduction of production costs, as well as a favourable regulatory framework.

5. Safeguarding Ecosystem Services and Cultural Heritage (SO5)

Seeks to minimise the environmental and cultural impacts of the expansion of offshore renewable energy. The EEAP undertakes to protect fish stocks, fishing activity and underwater cultural heritage by promoting the productivity of water bodies through floating wind devices. While this focus on sustainability is commendable, the effectiveness of mitigation measures will depend on the continuous monitoring of ecosystems and the ability to adapt to environmental changes.

The PAER also establishes specific operational objectives for each of the strategic objectives, including the provision of 2 GW of energy capacity by 2030, the creation of jobs in the blue economy and the installation of up to 2.5 GW for green hydrogen production. These operational objectives are ambitious and highlight Portugal's intention to lead the energy transition at the European level.

Once the strategy for offshore renewable energy has been defined in the PAER, the next steps

will be crucial for its effective implementation and for meeting the ambitious targets set out therein.

- a) To begin with, it will be necessary to finalise *detailed mapping of the maritime areas* and begin the *government-led procedures* for granting licences, ensuring transparency and competitiveness;
- b) At the same time, it will be essential to develop *environmental monitoring plans* to continually assess the impact of new infrastructure on marine ecosystems and traditional economic activities such as fishing and tourism
- c) Another fundamental step will be to mobilise private investment, through incentives and strategic partnerships, ensuring the economic viability of the projects;
- d) In addition, it will be essential to promote professional training and technological development, strengthening the national value chain associated with offshore renewable energy.
- e) Finally, the success of the PAER will depend on integrated and adaptive governance that dynamically monitors operational and environmental challenges, maintaining an ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders.