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Italy – Croatia

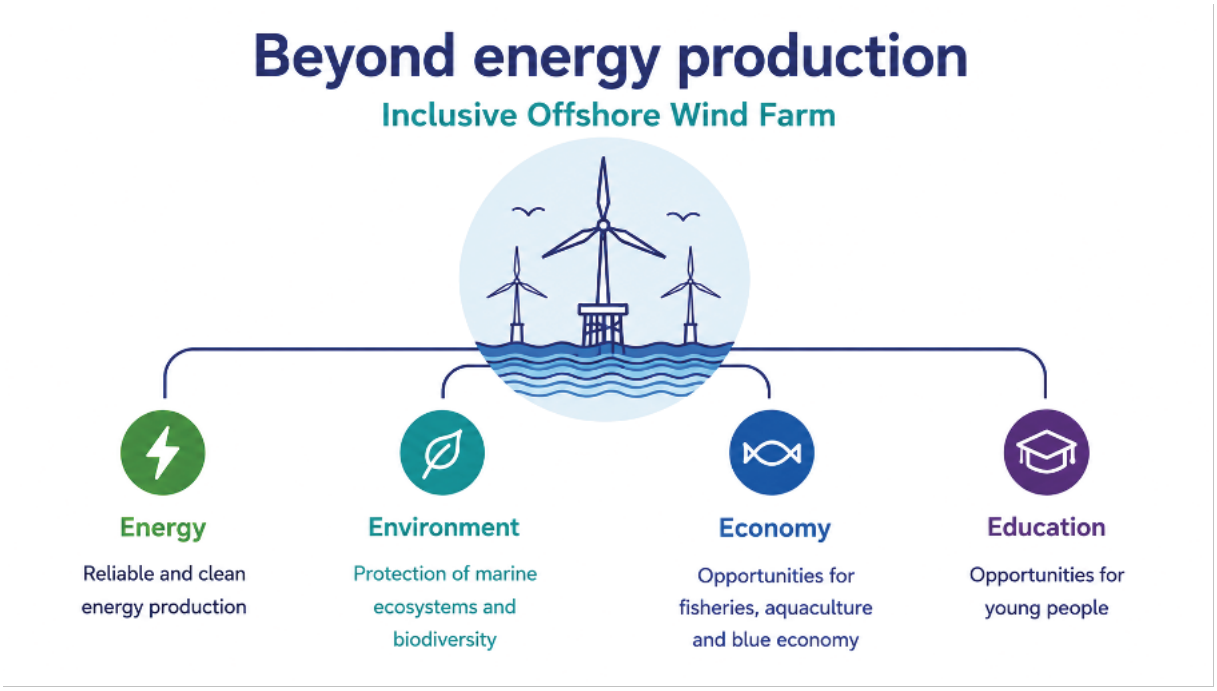
BEYOND

FINAL NEWSLETTER

BEYOND the Horizon: From Adriatic Potential to Regional Action

As the BEYOND project enters its final implementation phase, partners from Italy and Croatia are bringing together the knowledge, analyses and stakeholder contributions developed during 30 months of cross-border cooperation. The project started from a shared challenge: how can offshore wind support the Adriatic energy transition without becoming a competing or excluding activity in an already intensively used and environmentally sensitive marine space?

BEYOND has explored a different model. Instead of viewing offshore wind farms solely as infrastructure for electricity production, the project examines how they could become multifunctional platforms supporting marine ecosystem protection, fisheries, aquaculture, maritime transport, tourism and emerging activities such as offshore green hydrogen production. Four pilot regions have provided the testing ground for this approach: **Istria and Split-Dalmatia in Croatia, and Veneto and Apulia in Italy.**



Building a shared knowledge base for the Adriatic

The first stage of the project focused on understanding the different conditions that influence offshore wind development in the Adriatic. Partners analysed marine ecosystems, physical and natural conditions, offshore technologies, relevant infrastructure, wind-energy potential and interactions with fishing and aquaculture.

The marine ecosystem analysis covered water characteristics, seabed and seagrass habitats, benthic and fish biodiversity, marine mammals, seabird migration routes and sensitive or protected areas. These data provide a basis for identifying offshore wind locations and configurations that reduce environmental pressures from the earliest planning stage.

Physical and technical assessments examined wind conditions, water depth, seabed characteristics, waves, currents and other location-specific factors. Infrastructure and regulatory analyses added another layer, considering electricity and gas networks, ports, maritime routes, hydrogen infrastructure, available technologies and service providers. Together, these studies demonstrate that offshore wind development cannot be based on wind resources alone: each region requires a solution adapted to its environmental, spatial, infrastructural and regulatory context.

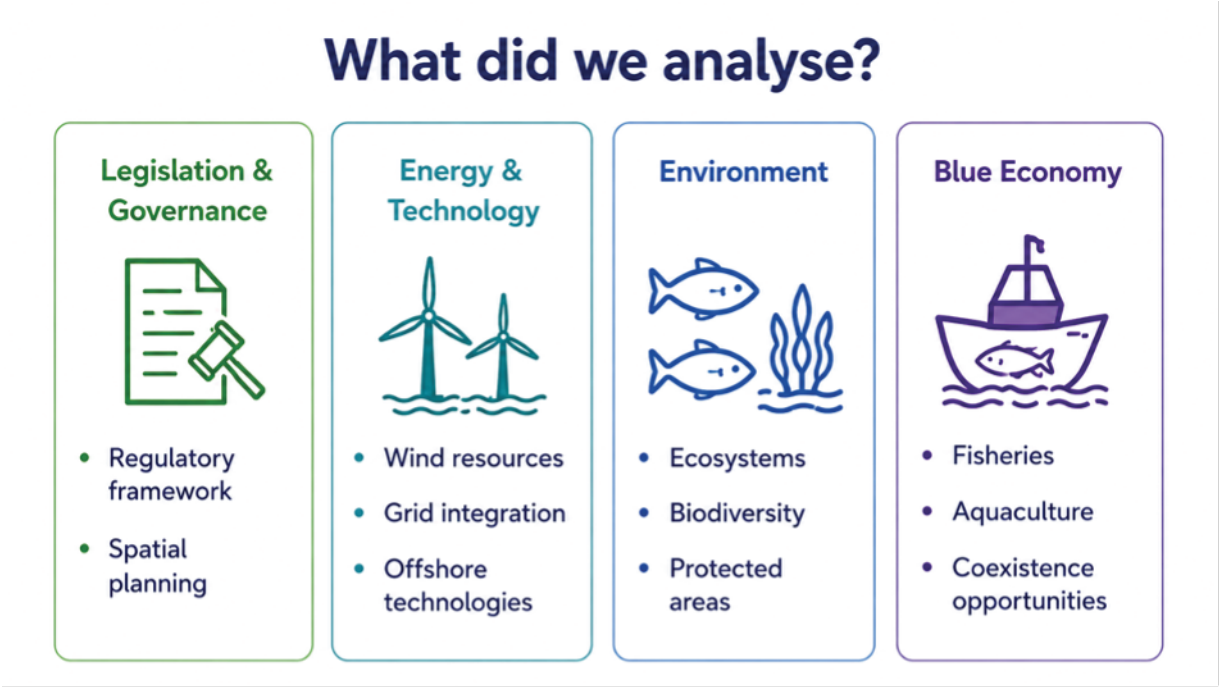
The project also assessed the overlap of potential offshore wind areas with essential fish habitats, fishing grounds, estimated catches and aquaculture activities. This work is helping the partnership understand where conflicts could arise, but also where changes in design, turbine spacing, cable routes or seabed interventions could support coexistence and potentially generate benefits for marine species and other blue economy sectors.

From regional potential to an Adriatic OWF conceptual design

Building on this knowledge base, BEYOND prepared a preliminary assessment of offshore wind potential and an indicative conceptual design for all four pilot regions. The assessment combined wind resources with water depth, seabed conditions, distance from electricity grids, ports, shipping routes, residential areas and airports.

Indicative 500, 700 and 1000 MW layouts were modelled for the four regions. These results are preliminary rather than project-level forecasts, but they confirm that all four regions have offshore wind potential, with different technologies and constraints. Shallow waters in Veneto favour fixed-bottom solutions, while the deeper areas of Apulia and Split-Dalmatia would require floating technologies.

The conceptual work also considered grid connection, energy storage and the possible integration of offshore wind with green hydrogen production. This creates opportunities to connect renewable electricity generation with the decarbonisation of ports and maritime transport while making better use of offshore infrastructure.



Stakeholders shaping the project results

Throughout the project, BEYOND involved a wide range of key stakeholders through regional and transregional Sustainable Blue Economy Labs, as well as through the Final Conference held in Zadar. Representatives of public authorities, research institutions, businesses, environmental organisations and blue economy sectors contributed local knowledge, practical insights and regional priorities.

Their input was used to validate the project analyses, refine the proposed solutions and ensure that the final results and recommendations respond to real environmental, economic and social conditions across the four pilot regions. The discussions also highlighted the need for clearer regulatory frameworks, stronger cooperation between sectors, meaningful stakeholder participation and an ecosystem-based approach to offshore wind planning.

Four regional pre-feasibility checks

During the final project phase, BEYOND will prepare **four regional pre-feasibility checks**, one for each pilot region: Istria, Split-Dalmatia, Veneto and Apulia.

The checks will bring together the available project findings and examine the proposed regional offshore wind concepts from several perspectives. They will review the available technical and environmental documentation, site characteristics, technology and infrastructure requirements, regulatory and permitting frameworks, economic and financial considerations, potential funding opportunities and the wider costs and benefits of the BEYOND approach.

Particular attention will be given to identifying missing data, unresolved constraints and the additional investigations that would be required before any future project could proceed to detailed design and development. Each check will therefore provide **region-specific conclusions, recommendations and proposed next steps**, helping regional authorities and stakeholders understand both the opportunities and the remaining barriers to sustainable offshore wind development.

The use of a common methodology will also make it possible to compare the four regional situations and identify shared Adriatic priorities. The methodology covers technical, regulatory, economic-financial and funding aspects, as well as a broader comparison between conventional offshore wind development and the integrated BEYOND approach.

Turning project evidence into policy recommendations

In parallel, the partnership is preparing the final **Blue Economy Recommendations to Policy-makers**. The recommendations will translate project analyses, stakeholder discussions, regional and transregional Sustainable Blue Economy Labs and lessons from European best practices into proposals for European, cross-border, national and regional governance levels.

The emerging priorities include clearer and more coordinated regulatory and permitting procedures, stronger alignment of offshore wind development with maritime spatial and energy planning, early integration of environmental constraints, improved port and grid infrastructure, and continuous stakeholder participation throughout project development.

The recommendations will also address multi-use offshore areas, coexistence with fisheries and aquaculture, opportunities for coastal communities and the potential integration of offshore wind with green hydrogen and sustainable maritime transport. Their aim is to help policymakers create the conditions in which offshore wind can contribute not only to renewable energy production, but also to environmental protection, regional innovation and sustainable blue economy growth.

Beyond energy production

BEYOND does not propose one universal offshore wind solution for the entire Adriatic. Its central finding is that successful development must respond to the specific characteristics of each territory and must be planned together with the sectors and communities that already depend on the sea.

By combining energy potential, ecosystem knowledge, technical planning, blue economy synergies and stakeholder participation, BEYOND is creating a shared foundation for the next steps. The project's lasting contribution will be a more integrated way of thinking about offshore wind: not as isolated energy infrastructure, but as part of a wider, sustainable and inclusive Adriatic blue economy.