

Press release

May 26, 2020

In the scope of the INTERREG-North Sea project „DECOM Tools“

## **HWWI drafts a new study: What needs to be done in offshore wind energy and decommissioning**

- Stakeholders see an increasing relevance of offshore decommissioning in the North Sea Region
- Various open questions regarding infrastructure, qualification, and regulation
- Obstacles must be removed soon

**(Hamburg, May 26, 2020) The Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI) has drafted a new study of offshore wind energy and decommissioning in the scope of the INTERREG North Sea Region Programme “DECOM Tools”. The focus is on the perspective of different stakeholder groups. It becomes clear that the requirements to successfully tackle the upcoming challenges have not been established yet.**

Most offshore wind energy facilities have a planned life expectancy of 20-25 years. Afterwards, each facility is either replaced by new components or fully decommissioning. The project “DECOM Tools” aims towards developing ecological and innovative concepts for the decommissioning of offshore wind farms. In this context, HWWI has drafted a new analysis based upon workshops with stakeholders in six North Sea Region countries.

The stakeholders showed a high degree of interest related to offshore decommissioning becoming a potential business case. But decommissioning volumes of relevant size for the industry are to expect just in the mid-term. “Entering the market is a bit of a bet on the future but we see a niche here which has not been occupied yet”, says Mirko Kruse, economist at the HWWI and author of the study.

It is expected that the majority of decommissioning costs will be related to transport and logistics. Particularly ports face a significant potential here, as far as the appropriate infrastructure is in place. A potential bottleneck: Both the availability of sufficient storage space and the training of qualified em-

ployees for offshore decommissioning is considered to be insufficient at the moment. Port operators and educational organizations are demanded to create the necessary requirements.

The current problems also involve regulatory uncertainties. For instance, the regulation regarding decommissioning is often not distinct and differs between countries. “A coherent European regulation is required to provide the operators and the downstream industry with planning security”, states Isabel Sünner, head of international cooperation at HWWI.

The national regulation regarding recycling of decommissioned components is also considered to be insufficient. Moreover, processes to properly recycle composite materials which are used for construction of the wind farms’ wings are not developed yet. In the scope of DECOM Tools, respective chemical processes are tested which could then be also applied to other economic sectors using composite materials (such as automotive, aircraft or marine industry).

Finally, open ecological questions remain. Since the foundations of offshore sites have become a habitat for marine life, thereunder protected species, this must be considered in the decommissioning process.

In the project “DECOM Tools” partners from Germany, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway cooperate over four years. The project is funded by the INTERREG NORTH Sea Region Programme of the European Union. The overall budget amounts to about 4.7 million Euro.

(3.379 characters)

[Download Stakeholder Analysis DECOM Tools 2020 \(PDF\)](#)

**Contact:**

**Mirko Kruse**

Hamburg Institute of International  
Economics (HWWI)  
Fahrenheitstr. 1 | D-28359 Bremen  
T: +49 (0)421 2208-241  
Email: [m-kruse@hwwi.org](mailto:m-kruse@hwwi.org)

**Press contact:**

**Elzbieta Hagemann**

Hamburg Institute of International Economics  
(HWWI)  
Oberhafenstr. 1 | D-20097 Hamburg  
T: 040 340576-100  
Email: [hagemann@hwwi.org](mailto:hagemann@hwwi.org)  
Web: [www.hwwi.org](http://www.hwwi.org)



Hamburg Institute  
of International  
Economics

Interreg  
North Sea Region  
Decom Tools

European Regional Development Fund



EUROPEAN UNION

### *About the HWWI*

*The Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI) is an independent economic research institute that carries out basic and applied research, while providing impetus for business, politics and society. The Hamburg Chamber of Commerce is the sole shareholder of the HWWI. The Helmut Schmidt University is an associated scientific partner of the Institute.*