

# Wind networking in Germany



Andreas Wellbrock

Projects such as “Inn2POWER” clearly show that WAB is also active in Europe, on behalf of its 350 members, in the wind energy sector.

“We have a very heterogeneous membership structure. It covers every aspect of the wind industry, ranging from very small start-up businesses to research institutes and major energy suppliers,” said Andreas Wellbrock, managing director of WAB.

WAB’s members are involved in project development, financing, insurance, manufacturing - foundation structures, towers, nacelles and rotor blades - logistics and installation, grid connection, service and operation as well as dismantling and repowering. WAB therefore is always able to make up-to-date and first-hand information available to its members on current issues.

A recent example of this is the network’s interest in wind-to-gas technology, the exploration of opportunities for its

PES heads to Germany to learn more about WAB, the leading business network for the wind industry in Germany’s northwest region and the nationwide contact partner for politics, media and industry for offshore wind power in the country.

development and research on its market potential for the wind industry.

The 5th WINDFORCE Baltic Sea conference was held in February this year in Tallinn, Estonia and proved a resounding success. “WAB is also present where exciting new markets are emerging. At its annual three-day WINDFORCE conference, held this year for the thirteenth time, WAB will host a specialist conference that has long held its own at the international level. Up-to-date and high-calibre contributions from member businesses have always attracted representatives of industry from across Europe to our event in the northwest region,” confirms Andreas Wellbrock.

On 9 May, state secretary and maritime coordinator Uwe Beckmeyer and state secretary Rainer Baake, from the Federal Ministry for Economics and Energy and CEO of Division Wind Power at Siemens Dr. Markus Tacke, will open this year’s WINDFORCE conference in Bremerhaven. “Thanks to funding for Fraunhofer IWES from the Federal Ministry for Economics and Energy, we have our very own onshore test site here in Bremerhaven. Its core component is Adwen’s 8-MW prototype, the world’s largest turbine, with a rotor diameter of 180 metres. It is already under construction,” Andreas Wellbrock explains.

The focus of the thirteenth WINDFORCE event, from the 9th to 11th May, will be on the tendering system for offshore wind power in Germany. The outcome of the first round of tendering is expected to be published before the conference opens and the 500 participants attending the conference will be

able to add to the highly stimulating discussions that are sure to arise.

The revised Renewable Energies Act came into force on 1 January 2017. As in Denmark and the Netherlands, the level of subsidies for offshore wind farms will be determined in auction proceedings from the start of the year. The most recent tendering results in Denmark and the Netherlands show that costs clearly go down in line with project volumes. Unlike in Germany, operators in those countries do not have to bear the costs for a wind farm’s transformer platform. Moreover, these projects are located much closer to the coast and in shallower waters, which reduces costs.

The end of January marked the Federal Network Agency’s official launch of the first tendering round for offshore wind power. “We’ll see hammer prices showing that generating one kilowatt-hour of offshore wind power is comparable with the generation of power in new gas or coal power plants,” explained WAB’s managing director. Industry experts assume that successful bids could be well below ten euro-cents per kilowatt-hour.

The other side of the coin, however, is the limited volume of expansion foreseen in Germany until 2030 and an associated shortfall in orders for some WAB member businesses. “If offshore wind power is to meet its industrial potential, which is undoubtedly there, we simply need to have more new offshore wind farms in the North and Baltic seas.” New construction will be necessary due to the pressure on prices forced by tendering in order to maintain and



expand the diversity of the industry and associated added value, as well as many highly qualified jobs.

For the first time, the conference will broach the topic of how important offshore wind power is for North Rhine-Westphalia and southern Germany.

Offshore wind energy is a national industry but has long been gaining importance across the globe and WAB has been aware of this for some time. "At the WINDFORCE event we like to think outside the box, of course. Developments in wind power technology in the United States and changes that may come about through Brexit will be up for discussion amongst the experts gathered there. The expansion figure for wind in Europe of 1,558 megawatts (MW) recorded in 2016 and the EUR 18.2 billion invested last year, in eleven offshore wind projects, underline the growing importance of offshore wind power for Europe," said Wellbrock.

A total of over 12.6 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity has now been connected to the grid. A total figure of some 24.6 gigawatts is expected by 2020. Market concentration amongst manufacturers was already very clear in 2016, and sector consolidation was noticed at every level.



According to the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC), offshore wind farms around the world with a total capacity of 2,219 MW were newly connected to the grid in 2016. In China, 592 MW went online, as did 30 MW in South Korea and

30 MW in the United States. "We are always providing opportunities for members to participate in a delegation and see for themselves the developments taking place elsewhere to gain insights into new markets," affirmed Andreas

Wellbrock, describing one of the advantages of WAB membership for businesses. “The WINDFORCE programme continues to include specialist presentations on regulatory issues, service and maintenance, recurring inspections, corrosion protection, and storage and grid connection.”

At the end of 2016 there were 4.1 GW connected to the grid in Germany. These offshore wind farms need to be maintained. The new Renewable Energies Act licences an operating period of 25 years. The key to cost reduction is experience and the optimisation of operation and service plans that come with it. Businesses that have been members from the outset will provide insight into optimised logistical solutions and innovative maintenance plans. Experts in corrosion protection and rotor blades will share their knowledge. The increasing importance of submarine cables and seabed cabling will also be featured, with WAB member businesses providing expert knowledge on this topic.

The topic of grids and storage is relatively new in the WINDFORCE programme. WAB supports a more rapid expansion of transmission grids and storage technology as part of an integrated system. “We’re very much looking forward to welcoming many interested participants to the thirteenth WINDFORCE in Bremerhaven from 9 May”, WAB’s managing director said.

WAB was the first wind energy association to be included in the “go-cluster” action, in which Germany’s Ministry for Economics and Technology brings together the “most innovative and best performing” networks in Germany. “Our strength here transcends national borders. Many internationally oriented wind industry businesses have become WAB members for this very



reason. The basis for this is good, trusting partnerships with members, rapid and straightforward contacts with other members and the attractive perks that members get when participating in WAB events”, said Wellbrock.

WAB also promotes cooperative ventures, creates networking opportunities within the context of delegation visits, initiates training and education projects, supports R&D projects and provides opportunities for member businesses to take part in trade fairs and congresses.

WAB therefore facilitates exchange at the international level. It regularly provides members with information on current topics with studies, position statements, press releases, newsletters and advocacy

support. The focus of activity for WAB lies in Germany northwest region, but from the outset it has been open to businesses, institutes and institutions operating on the international stage. Since 2002, the wind energy network has continually grown to become a leading voice for the German offshore industry.

The Offshore Wind Industry Alliance (OWIA) was set up jointly by WAB and other associations in 2012. The OWIA joint office in Berlin makes it easier for political communication about offshore wind energy to take place with better networking and in direct proximity to professional and political discussion in Berlin. This has further optimised the flow of information to and from Berlin for WAB and its members.

Andreas Wellbrock gives his view on making a success of Germany’s energy turnaround.

To begin with, the concept of the Energiewende is described internationally as the “energy turnaround”, a notable success in itself. Initially, those who doubted the idea of an energy turnaround and smiled condescendingly at Germany have to a certain extent now become enthusiastic advocates and given the development good press.

The energy turnaround has long since become a global issue that can help in mitigating climate change. The Paris Climate Agreement came into force in 2016 and, as a consequence, many national climate plans have been designed to comply with it. By 2022 all of Germany’s nuclear power plants are to be taken off the grid and the importance of renewable energies, and particularly of

offshore wind, as a provider of baseload power, as well as onshore wind, is growing. Success is always being measured by the cost of change. That is why the competitiveness of wind power is very important.

Next to the growth required in the proportion of renewable energies in the system, a reduction in individual energy consumption, an increase in energy efficiency, and adjustments in the transport sector are crucial for a successful energy turnaround. It has already been mentioned that national grid infrastructure, storage technologies and future networking across Europe are significant factors.

The wind industry has shown the way and is bringing down costs. It has come up with innovative and competitive solutions and developed an industry with

the diversity of players and expertise needed. Wanted now are reliable policy framework conditions and substantial expansion volumes.

This presupposes rapid grid expansion on land and correspondingly at sea. The industry is making every effort in supporting the federal government, states and grid operators. Some 150,000 jobs in the wind industry on land and at sea and the value creation associated with the wind industry are, next to the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2020, an important criteria for public acceptance of the energy turnaround.

Synchronising the expansion of renewables and transmission lines, and defining goals for the sector for 2030, are essential for the success of the energy turnaround.

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