

Turning offshore wind ambitions into projects

PES talks to Alessandra Astolfi, Global Exhibition Director of the Green & Technology Division at Italian Exhibition Group (IEG), about the conditions needed to get offshore wind projects built and the role of KEY, The Energy Transition Expo. The event returns to Rimini Expo Centre, Italy, from 10th to 12th March 2027, with a growing focus on offshore and onshore wind.



PES: Alessandra, it's good to have you with us. Europe has ambitious plans for offshore wind, but progress varies considerably across the region. How do you see the market at the moment, and where are the strongest signs of progress?

Alessandra Astolfi: The targets for offshore wind development are very ambitious, and its technological and industrial potential is now widely recognised, but growth remains uneven.

According to WindEurope's September 2026 report, 8.8 GW of new wind capacity was installed in Europe in the first six months of 2026, including 7.1 GW in the EU-27 alone. Onshore wind accounted for 74% of the new capacity, while 2.3 GW of new offshore capacity was connected to the grid.

Europe now has more than 311 GW of total wind capacity, including 40.9 GW offshore. The EU-27 accounts for nearly 252 GW of the total, including 23.2 GW offshore.

The most encouraging signs come from the increasing maturity of technologies, developments in floating offshore wind and investment in the infrastructure needed to support new projects. At the same time, there is growing recognition that offshore wind cannot be considered simply as a standalone power generation technology: it requires suitable ports and grids, skills, a competitive industrial supply chain and access to finance.

PES: Europe has set ambitious offshore wind targets, but getting projects built is still proving difficult. What needs to happen to close that gap?

AA: The key is to move from planning to implementation. Targets are necessary, but they must be accompanied by the right conditions to ensure that projects can actually be delivered.

First and foremost, permitting timelines need to be more predictable and the regulatory framework clearer. Investment is also needed in the European supply chain, ports and logistics infrastructure, alongside financial instruments capable of supporting high upfront investment costs.

Institutions, industry, developers, investors and local communities must work together. This applies across the energy transition, and at KEY we bring these groups together to discuss how projects can move forward.

PES: The Mediterranean is increasingly being seen as an important market for offshore wind. How much potential do you think it has, and what will be needed to unlock it?

AA: The Mediterranean has enormous potential, given the need to diversify energy sources and increase renewable energy production.

It could also become a platform for cooperation between countries. This makes international dialogue particularly important. Sharing expertise and experience can help establish common conditions for the sector's development. However, turning this potential into projects requires regulatory, permitting, infrastructure and industrial issues to be addressed simultaneously.

PES: Energy security has become a much bigger part of the conversation around renewables. What role can offshore wind play?

AA: Offshore wind can contribute to energy security by diversifying the energy mix. We also need an integrated system that can generate, transmit, store and manage energy efficiently. Offshore wind development must go hand in hand with investment in grids and other infrastructure, including ports.

The goal must be to build an energy system that is more resilient, diversified and capable of meeting European demand.

PES: What are the biggest obstacles still holding offshore wind back?

AA: Permitting and the length of authorisation processes are certainly significant issues. Other challenges include grid availability and capacity, construction costs, access to finance and the need to strengthen the supply chain.

Offshore wind also has specific port-related requirements, and the need to develop specialised skills must not be overlooked.

Regulation, infrastructure, investment and innovation need to be planned together to support offshore wind development.

PES: How is KEY 2027 responding to the changes now taking place across the wind sector, particularly in offshore wind?

AA: KEY has grown in recent years, and in 2027 we plan to expand the WEM exhibition sector, Wind Expo for Med, which is dedicated to wind power in all its forms.

Ports will also be a central topic, with the confirmed presence of the Su.port area, Sustainable Ports for Energy Transition. We are also strengthening our partnerships with industry associations.

KEY brings together different technologies and the people involved in developing them. As energy systems become more interconnected, those discussions are increasingly relevant to the projects represented at the exhibition.

PES: For companies, developers and other industry stakeholders, what is the real value of meeting face to face at an event such as KEY?

AA: In the energy transition sector, including wind power and particularly offshore wind, projects are complex and involve a wide range of stakeholders.

Meeting in person helps people from different markets build relationships and discuss their needs and experience. Participants at KEY include companies involved in developing and managing wind farms, utilities, investors and major industry associations, such as Associazione delle Energie Rinnovabili Offshore (AERO). We have worked closely with AERO for several years.

That is why international participation matters to us. KEY connects developers with suppliers, investors with companies, businesses with industrial partners and operators with institutions and associations.

PES: KEY brings together different parts of the energy industry as well as companies from a growing number of international markets. How important is that mix when it comes to sharing expertise, technology and practical experience?



Alessandra Astolfi



AA: It is essential for the development of offshore wind, as well as all the other sectors involved in the energy transition. Technologies, expertise and supply chains now extend across national borders.

Bringing experienced professionals from countries at different stages of market development to KEY allows them to share practical experience and compare approaches that have already been tested.

We want those international connections to help people develop and apply new ideas.

PES: Do you see greater opportunities now for established offshore wind markets to work with countries where the sector is still developing?

AA: Absolutely. More mature markets have built up valuable expertise and experience in project development, engineering, supply chains, operations & maintenance (O&M) and infrastructure management. Sharing this knowledge with emerging markets can help accelerate the development of new supply chains.

At the same time, new markets can offer industrial and investment opportunities and, in some cases, particularly favourable conditions for testing new technologies and models.

PES: When the industry comes together at KEY 2027 in Rimini from 10th to 12th March, which conversations do you think will matter most?

AA: The central issue will be how to turn targets into projects that can be delivered, considering the technology, regulation and investment needed.

The discussion also needs to include opportunities beyond the Mediterranean basin.

I would like to see people from across the energy sector discuss how their work fits together and how they can coordinate projects to accelerate decarbonisation.

PES: Looking beyond the event itself, what would you hope KEY 2027 helps to move forward for the wind industry?

AA: The global targets are important, and the available technologies are increasingly mature. The priority is to put the conditions in place for projects to be built.

Through KEY, we want to connect people with the expertise, technology and partners they need to move their projects forward.

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