

Note: Below are extracts from an article published by The Irish Times (30th January 2024) and as referenced below.

Hitting offshore wind energy targets may be worth €38 billion to economy but skills shortages must be addressed.



*Analysis conducted by BVG Associates and commissioned for Green Tech Skillnet and **Wind Energy Ireland**.*

According to The Irish Times, O’Sullivan (2024), in order to reach its committed targets for wind energy supply by 2050, government and industry will need to collaborate closely to create the jobs and skillset required to manage and deliver a new generation of off-shore wind farms:

Achieving Ireland’s 2050 offshore wind energy targets could be worth at least €38 billion to the economy, according to an analysis that warns this could be undermined by skills shortages. The analysis highlights “the need for a targeted skills development fund to ensure Irish workers and businesses reap the benefit from this enormous investment”. The Government has a target of five gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind energy by 2030, and 37GW by 2050, which is up to 10 times the current electricity demand.

The analysis is part of a report being launched at the Wind Energy Ireland (WEI) annual conference on Tuesday, was conducted by BVG Associates and commissioned for Green Tech Skillnet and WEI.

While there is already a growing number of Irish companies involved in offshore wind energy, including some competing internationally, “the industry will need far more workers if it is to achieve the targets set by Government”, it says.

The report identifies numerous parallel industries, such as marine and engineering, where workers have skills transferable to wind energy development. Collaboration between government and industry will be key to ensuring the billions of euro to be invested in building a new generation of offshore wind farms stays in Ireland, it concludes.

O’Sullivan (2024)

This Irish Times article by O’Sullivan (2024), continues by suggesting that up to 146,000 full-time equivalent jobs will need to be generated by 2040, at the most ambitious end of the scale, mostly in manufacturing, with government now sharing in its commitment to green jobs and skills.

The report projects a total demand of at least 19,500 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs up to 2030 in the business-as-usual scenario if Ireland realises its capacity targets. In an intervention scenario, it projects a cumulative demand of 30,000 FTE jobs up to 2030. Up to 2040, if Ireland increases its capabilities in the most ambitious scenario, it would realise 146,000 FTE jobs.

“Many of these additional jobs will likely come in the manufacturing phase, such as tower and substructure foundation manufacture, as this is where Ireland has the greatest potential to increase its local content,” it said.

Responding to the findings, Minister for Innovation Simon Harris said: “Developing green skills and green jobs has become a top priority of mine and my Department. Development of our offshore wind resources is a key objective for Government. Not only will it help us reduce our carbon emissions, but it will bring greater energy security and reduce costs for consumers.”

“Offshore wind energy is not just about cutting carbon emissions and providing cheaper power. It is Ireland’s future economic strategy. Every offshore wind farm means new investment, high-quality green jobs and greater energy security,” said WEI chief executive Noel Cunniffe.

O’Sullivan (2024)

O’Sullivan (2024), in his Irish Times article details how the report identifies key recommendations, among which is the need to invest further in training partnerships, third-level education and attract the necessary skills from abroad, particularly Irish nationals to give Ireland a competitive edge:

Key recommendations include:

- Establishing a skills development fund for targeted investment in private-public training partnerships and third-level investment.
- Attracting workers, particularly Irish nationals, from abroad to plug short-term skills shortages through initiatives such as relocation grants.
- Ensuring offshore specialisms are covered in public education and private training providers to equip future workers with the necessary skillsets to participate in the offshore wind industry.
- Building expert knowledge in transmission systems to address the severe skills shortage in electrical system expertise, both domestically and internationally.

Skillnet Ireland chief executive Paul Healy said: “With programmes spanning wind, solar, and hydrogen, the Green Tech Skillnet supports the optimisation of renewables on the Irish grid and has successfully engaged over 3,000 trainees in the sector since 2021. ... we look forward to continuing our collaborations with Green Tech Skillnet and making sure that Ireland has a future-ready workforce to further build our competitive edge in this sector.”

The report maps out job opportunities presented by each phase of project delivery, identifying the top 42 roles which are expected to be of most relevance for Ireland. These include roles in early-stage development and project management activities, as well as certain elements of the operations, maintenance, and service activity, particularly in new floating wind technologies.

O’Sullivan (2024)

References

O’Sullivan, K. (2024) ‘Hitting offshore wind energy targets may be worth €38 billion to economy but skills shortages must be addressed – report’, *Irish Times*, 30 January. Available at : Hitting offshore wind energy targets may be worth €38 billion to economy but skills shortages must be addressed - report – The Irish Times . (Accessed 30 January 2024).

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