



Press Release, 19 April 2023

2023 North Sea Summit: Joint declaration to boost hydrogen ramp-up

Major European gas transmission system operators join forces to harness the potential of wind power and hydrogen in the North Sea

Kassel / Essen. The North Sea holds great potential for affordable, secure and sustainable energy for Europe. To get this natural power plant up and running and give the hydrogen economy a strong boost and thus put Europe's future energy supply on a firm footing, the transmission infrastructure needs to be further developed in a timely manner.

In the run-up to the 2023 North Sea Summit in Ostend, Belgium, which will be attended by the heads of government from the countries bordering the North Sea, nine European transmission system operators have pledged to ramp up the hydrogen economy. As the successor to the Esbjerg format of 2022, which aimed to have 150 GW of offshore wind capacity installed by 2050, the 2023 North Sea Summit is intended to send a strong, joint signal for green transformation driven by hydrogen and offshore wind power.

To achieve the ambitious targets for both offshore wind production and associated green hydrogen generation, the gas transmission system operators bordering the North Sea – Energinet, Fluxys, GASCADE, Gas Networks Ireland, Gassco, Gasunie, GRTGaz, National Gas Transmission and OGE – have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which they will deliver to their respective heads of state on the eve of the summit. In it, they commit to a coordinated development of hydrogen infrastructure to exploit the energy resources that the North Sea has to offer. The signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding for Germany are the German gas transmission system operators GASCADE and Open Grid Europe (OGE).

"Ostend shows that we urgently need integrated, cross-border network planning to be able to use offshore wind energy for electricity and hydrogen production," said GASCADE Managing Director Dr Christoph von dem Bussche. "The advantages are obvious: energy security and diversification of Europe's supply sources."

Towards this end, GASCADE and the Belgian company Fluxys have committed to the AquaDuctus offshore pipeline project, which will efficiently and sustainably collect hydrogen from various sources in the North Sea for transportation to shore. In a first step, wind farms in the German Exclusive Economic Zone are to be connected to the German mainland by a 200-kilometre pipeline by 2030. In a second step, this pipeline will be extended and linked to hydrogen pipelines from other countries bordering the North Sea.

"The 2023 North Sea Summit underlines the importance of European cooperation – especially when it comes to securing Europe's future energy supply by interconnecting renewable energies such as offshore wind and hydrogen. Hydrogen infrastructure plays a crucial role here," said OGE CEO Dr Jörg Bergmann.

"For this reason, OGE and RWE have launched the national infrastructure project "H2ercules", which will supply consumers in the south and west of Germany with green hydrogen produced in Germany and imported from abroad. This will involve developing several import corridors, including with Fluxys in Belgium, but also with other partners in Norway, France and the Netherlands."

To ensure that the development of the H2 infrastructure succeeds quickly and efficiently, existing natural gas pipelines will be repurposed to carry hydrogen and supplemented by new dedicated hydrogen pipelines. In order for these plans to succeed in the short term, key political decisions will have to be made by the summer of 2023.

To underline the importance of the aforementioned infrastructure projects for the ramp-up of the hydrogen economy, the project partners have applied to the European Commission for the status of a Project of Common Interest (PCI). In addition, the AquaDuctus project has been shortlisted by the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Climate Protection as an important Project of Common European Interest (IPCEI).

To make the North Sea Declaration the catalyst for the hydrogen ramp-up, the signatories have laid out clear demands, which include

- the development of a legal and regulatory framework for the emerging hydrogen infrastructure – offshore as well as onshore
- a long-term and cross-border perspective for the optimal use of electricity and hydrogen
- settlement of funding issues between countries
- the acceleration of licensing procedures and maritime spatial planning with the involvement of the gas TSOs

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About GASCADE

GASCADE Gastransport GmbH independently operates a gas transmission network throughout Germany. The Kassel-based company offers its customers state-of-the-art and competitive transport services for hydrogen and other gases in the heart of Europe via its own high-pressure pipeline network which is around 3,200 kilometres long. GASCADE is pursuing the goal of converting its transmission network to the transport of hydrogen and is therefore involved in several onshore and offshore hydrogen projects.

About OGE

OGE is one of Europe's leading gas transmission system operators. With our pipeline network spanning approximately 12,000 kilometres, we transport gas throughout Germany. Our geographic location makes us the central link for gas flows across the European single market. 1,450 OGE employees ensure security of supply. We make our network available to all market participants in a transparent and non-discriminatory way in line with market needs. We enable energy supply. Today and in the energy mix of the future.

For more information go to www.oge.net