



EC Targeted Consultation on Dedicated Grid Areas

DSO Entity Reply | 9 December 2024

Why are being consulted

In line with the Grids Action Plan, in view of the permitting obstacles encountered by energy infrastructure projects, the Commission will provide guidance on designating areas for grid and storage infrastructure necessary to integrate renewable energy into the electricity system in line with Article 15(e) of the Renewable Energy Directive. Under the Directive, Member States may adopt one or more plans to designate dedicated infrastructure areas for the development of grid and storage projects that are necessary to integrate renewable energy into the electricity system where such development is not expected to have a significant environmental impact, such an impact can be duly mitigated or, where not possible, compensated for. The aim of such areas shall be to support and complement the renewables acceleration areas. Under the conditions established in Article 15(e), infrastructure located in designated areas for grid and storage infrastructure can be exempted from certain environmental assessments.

The aim of the guidance will be to support Member States in appropriately designating areas for grid and storage infrastructure necessary to integrate renewable energy into the electricity system in an effective and efficient manner leading to true acceleration of permitting for energy infrastructure. The guidance will take into account the fact that, in principle, due to its length and characteristics, energy infrastructure should be built everywhere where it is needed at an accelerated pace in view of the energy transition without such build out being limited to any specific areas. Nevertheless, the buildout of such infrastructure should limit as much as possible environmental impacts.

This targeted consultation will be the main consultation activity. The target stakeholders are public authorities, system operators, industry associations and non-governmental organisations.

DSO Entity Reply to questionnaire

Question 1

What do you think should be the necessary steps for the timely and effective set-up and implementation of dedicated grid areas as set out in the revised Renewable Energy Directive?

Given the need to achieve the EU's energy and climate objectives in a timely manner and the current lack of transposition of the Renewable Energy Directive (2023/2413/EU; RED), Member States must transpose Article 15(e) as soon as possible into enforceable national frameworks, setting timelines and roles for implementation.

To ensure effective and timely implementation of dedicated grid areas provided under Art. 15e of RED, several steps and additional guidance will be needed including:

- The setting of transparent and standardised criteria to designate the dedicated grid areas, clarifying the scope of these areas and the type of infrastructure projects covered.
- When designating the areas, geospatial tools should be used to identify optimal locations based on renewable energy potential, environmental constraints, and grid readiness (taking into account the grid capacity available, number of connection requests to the network and the potential need for grid construction projects, relying on strategic planning outlined in the Distribution Network Developments Plans).
- The designation of dedicated grid areas should be done in parallel with (or shortly after) the mapping of the renewable acceleration areas (under Art. 15c) which they complement.
- Efficient coordination should be ensured at an early stage with relevant and concerned actors to ensure their involvement. From the start and without delay, environmental agencies, local governments, national regulators and incumbent administrations (national, regional, local) should be involved in the process and be tasked with providing prompt and precise information about the potential affection of environmental or other kinds of authorisations and permits. DSOs would integrate such information into their grid planning procedures.
- Clarification on the role and responsibilities of related parties. The responsibility for the designation of such areas should be assigned to a competent authority, but electricity system operators should be consulted and collaborate with the relevant authority by – for instance - providing data on relevant grid capacities. Moreover, these designated grid areas should be aligned with other regulations, such as flexible connection agreements.
- Clarification on the process to be followed by Member States when consulting '*relevant infrastructure system operators*' in the preparation of the plan(s) designating the dedicated grid areas (as provided under Art. 15e(1)).
- Clear nationally applicable rules and timelines are required to achieve practical implementation of the directive's purpose.

Question 2

What type of guidance and support would be necessary in your jurisdiction for the successful designation of dedicated grid areas that are most effective in integrating renewable energy and enable specific infrastructure projects to benefit from significant permitting acceleration?

Based on feedback received from DSO Entity's membership from different Member States (including Greece, Spain, Sweden, Lithuania and France), in general, Member States could benefit from concrete guidance on the type of energy infrastructure covered and the methodology for mapping and assessing potential areas. These guidance should provide clear criteria for the designation of the dedicated grid areas and describe the benefits

that these areas will entail from a permitting perspective, to ensure that all relevant societal actors have a good understanding.

Further indications should also be provided on how to take into account network plans, and this regards how to consult system operators. Guidance would also be welcomed on how to implement anticipatory investments in national regulation to cope with the growing demand of industry to decarbonise in an ambitious way, and with minimal added risk to grid operators.

Furthermore, support should be given to encourage a more straight-forward and simplified approach as to reduce the number of competent administration levels involved in environmental authorisations (local, regional, national). In Spain, for instance, the different levels of administrative responsibilities that exist can make the process complex.

Question 3

What do you consider the most appropriate criteria for establishing the sites for effective and meaningful dedicated grid areas?

When designating the dedicated grid areas, the following criteria should be set and considered:

- Renewable energy potential.
- Available grid capacity aligning, when possible, with the Distribution Network Development Plans (DNDPs) to ensure strategic mapping integrating the potential needs for grid infrastructure expansion, upgrading or construction, and anticipating the number of connection requests. This would contribute to increasing synchronization with RES planning to prevent potential problems at a later stage.
- Identification and recognition of preexisting infrastructures (energy, roads, communications, etc.) in the vicinity as it may be seen as a direct enabler of a dedicated grid and storage area, thus eliminating the environmental check.
- Environmental impact by taking into account environmental protection, biodiversity protection and conservation, natural resources conservation.
- Operations and materials of low carbon footprint.
- The assessment of the DNDPs in relation to conflicting interests in the form of environmental considerations and buildability should also be taken into account.
- Availability of areas for new substations and availability of corridors for power lines
- Boundaries of concession areas

Some insights could be taken from countries where similar provisions are already in place. For instance, Lithuania, to some extent, already has such measures in place. The Lithuanian TSO offers three potential profiles for wind, solar, and storage, while the DSO provides information on available capacity in specific grid areas. However, an improvement could be to align these capacity maps with environmental requirements and other relevant factors.

Question 4

What aspects should be taken into account in such designation as regards environmental impacts, broader spatial planning considerations, land use regulations, stakeholder engagement and public participation? What other areas do you consider relevant to be taken into consideration and how?

When designating the dedicated grid areas, the following aspects should be considered with a high relevance of grid-related considerations:

- As regards to environmental impacts: The areas of high biodiversity value, ecologically sensitive areas, protected areas within Natura 2000 network or other protection status due to endangered/threatened species of flora and fauna.
- As for broader spatial planning considerations: Further alignment with grid considerations and long-term planning by using for instance Distribution Network Development Plans (DNDPs) and/or geospatial tools.
- As regards stakeholder engagement and public participation: The DNDPs involve comprehensive stakeholder consultations, including system users, transmission system operators (TSOs), and national regulatory authorities which ensures that the DNDPs are aligned with broader energy transition goals and reflect a shared understanding of future grid needs.
- From DSO perspective, grid available capacity should be taken into account and flexible connections should also be considered.

Furthermore, other areas could be taken into account including further incentives to foster the transposition of the overriding public interest principle into national law. It should directly apply to electricity grids that integrate renewables in a wider sense, namely, distribution grids that in general integrate renewable self-consumption in all their coverage area.

Question 5

What are possible additional tools and good practices that could facilitate effective and rapid designation of dedicated grid areas consistently across the EU?

Additional tools and good practices which could be used:

- Increased cooperation between the different relevant actors at local and national levels to ensure a comprehensive approach in designating these areas.
- Existing digital and geospatial tools and platforms to support and optimise the identification of grid areas with regular updated data on available grid capacity, generation and consumption patterns, renewable energy potential, and environmental situation.
- Interactive GIS tools to guide decision-making and transparency.
- EU-wide Knowledge Sharing through online repositories of case studies and success stories.
- Stakeholder engagement best practices sharing such as the Commission's Ten Guiding Principles for Public Engagement in the Development of Energy Infrastructure Projects.
- Digitalisation of local and regional administrations and the coordination among them.

Good practices already exist that can provide support.

- Several network capacity maps existing in Member States at national or more local levels and other tools are being developed. In Denmark for instance, the Danish DSOs have developed a publicly available map that divides Denmark into zones and specifies whether it is a production surplus area (green), an area that is evenly balanced between production and consumption (yellow) or a consumption dominated area (red). The interactive map is updated on an annual basis to ensure that it reflects the ongoing developments in consumption and production patterns across Denmark. This tool can contribute to ensuring cost-efficient and expedient integration of the new renewable energy production to the Danish distribution grid.
- Digital tools and platforms are also implemented to monitor and simplify environmental assessment, request for connection to the network and organize public consultation and engagement (e.g. in France, Portugal, Spain, Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Republic of Ireland).

Question 6

Do you already have in your jurisdiction provisions regarding specific areas particularly suitable for energy infrastructure may they be the dedicated infrastructure areas or other zonal planning tools? Please explain how they were established and what has been taken into consideration.

Please find below feedback from some countries on provisions or practices (or lack of) from their jurisdictions:

- In Spain there is no specific legal instrument to identify areas suitable for energy infrastructure. Local and regional authorities may occasionally include in their urban planning specifications certain land pre-allocated for energy projects (for example, for substations).
- In the Netherlands, while it does not identify dedicated grid areas, the multi-year program for energy, infrastructure and climate (MIEK) identifies energy infrastructure expansion projects of high societal importance by establishing a list outlining the projects most needed in each province. The projects are integrated into the investment plans of system operators and the spatial policies of provinces and municipalities.
- In Sweden, provisions already exist, such as municipal comprehensive plans and detailed development plans. The national interests in energy distribution are taken into account by the Swedish Energy Agency as part of its responsibility.
- In France, there is no existing provisions about designated specific areas for energy infrastructure. However, the designation of “acceleration zones” for renewables energy production projects is an ongoing process following the introduction of provisions in the 2023 “APER” law (law for the RES acceleration zones). Article 15 calls on local authorities to define, by deliberation of their municipal councils and following public consultation (in accordance with procedures freely determined by them), acceleration zones where they wish to see renewable energy projects set up as a matter of priority (acceleration zones for the establishment of land-based renewable energy production facilities). Projects located in these ZAEEnRs will thus be able to benefit from financial incentives and simplified administrative authorization procedures.

Lithuania has a concrete example on designating maritime area for the deployment of offshore renewable energy which you can see detailed below:

- Lithuania’s maritime spatial plan was developed as a part of the Comprehensive Plan for the Republic of Lithuania, including a section on ‘Maritime territories’ that complements the terrestrial spatial plan. Adopted by the Parliament on 11 June 2015, this plan expired in 2020, and a new Comprehensive Plan was adopted on 29 September 2021, integrating components of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). The MSP provides that areas for the installation of offshore wind farms and corridors for connecting these farms to onshore networks must be provided for, considering the growth rates of the rapidly developing offshore wind energy sector in Europe as a whole, including the Baltic Sea. It identified potential territories that are most suitable for the development of renewable energy, including wind energy, projects at sea.
- A study was conducted to identify priority areas for offshore wind development of the Lithuanian Territorial Sea and/or Exclusive Economic Zone in the Baltic Sea, where the development of power plants using RES is appropriate. Two maritime areas were designated based on different criteria in Government’s resolutions (i.e., Resolutions No. 697 of 22 June 2020 and No. 171 of 15 March 2023). The first maritime area was selected based on technological (i.e., installed capacity, plant layout, power density), territorial (i.e., rational use of the site, depth/terrain, distance from coast/ports, feasibility of the zones, wind speed) and infrastructure (i.e., harmony link route, location of the offshore substation) criteria. The second one was selected considering the results of studies and surveys carried out and the main criteria that have the greatest influence on the selection of offshore wind farm sites and the costs associated with farm development (i.e. sea depth and wind speed).
- In addition, an engineering infrastructure development plan was approved by the Energy Ministry for the territory of Lithuania’s Territorial Sea and/or Exclusive Economic Zone in the Baltic Sea, which is

to be used for development of renewable energy. This spatial planning document determines the specific areas where offshore wind farms can be developed and operated in phases, reserving corridors for infrastructure and ship movements. The document also stipulates that, in addition to wind farms, other activities related to the production of energy from renewable sources (e.g. the installation of solar photovoltaic power plants, wave power plants, and current power plants) may also be developed in the planned area.

Question 7

How should zonal or spatial planning or mapping of the territory in your jurisdiction take into account space necessary for energy infrastructure development (e.g. maritime spatial planning)?

The connection of new renewable installations to the distribution grid often entails grid infrastructure expansion or reinforcement. For strategic grid planning, it is essential for DSOs to know in advance the type of generation and consumption facilities that are planned, and where and when they will be installed. Therefore, RES deployment, spatial planning and grid infrastructure development should increasingly go in hand (for instance, it can be helpful, if a particular urban development requires certain energy infrastructure to be already in place beforehand). As mentioned above with the Netherlands example, some jurisdictions are already implementing practices which strive to consider grid development in spatial planning.

For maritime spatial planning, Lithuania already has provisions (see details in answer to previous question).

Question 8

How should other uses of land or maritime space already established for other purposes accommodate or co-exist with energy infrastructure development?

In practice, it is very difficult to use any other dedicated area (e.g. maritime, archeological) to develop energy infrastructure. Guidance on how to make both areas compatible will be welcome.

Question 9

In case of areas identified in Natura 2000 sites and in areas designated under national protection schemes for nature and biodiversity conservation, how have you determined that there are no proportionate alternatives for their deployment, taking into account the objectives of the site?

Grid infrastructures are subject to other procedures in marine natural parks, national and regional parks, nature reserves and listed sites.

Please find below examples from specific countries:

- In Greece, alternative location sites have to be identified using GIS or other geospatial tools for mapping officially designated protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value.
- In Lithuania, areas to connect offshore windfarms to the electricity transmission networks were identified and planned in the engineering infrastructure development plan (the project of special national importance), as follows: "Preparation of the territories required to connect power plants using renewable energy resources, planned to be developed in the part(s) of the territorial sea of the Republic of Lithuania and (or) the exclusive economic zone of the Republic of Lithuania in the Baltic Sea, to the electricity transmission networks for the development of engineering infrastructure". All

the justifications, why it is more reasonable to go through Natura 2000 and under what conditions are clearly stated in the document.

- In France, there are several protected areas, obeying to different scheme including Natura 2000. The sites within Natura 2000 are designated under the Birds and the Habitats Directives. Human activities and infrastructure projects are possible in Natura 2000 sites. To avoid activities that are detrimental to biodiversity, projects likely to have an impact on protected species and habitats must be subject to an impact assessment. France also uses SIG and there are many information tools via public open data with information about production, consumption, grid mapping and data.

When considering proportionate alternatives, a possibility could be to have broader use of the principle of overriding public interest so that it applies to electricity grids and storage but also to Natura 2000 or other protected areas when the impact is deemed minor. Future guidance could further investigate and provide support for this.

Question 10

Have proportionate mitigation measures for the construction of energy infrastructure, linked to the dedicated infrastructure areas provided by Article 15(e) of the Renewable Energy Directive or otherwise, been established in your jurisdiction?

In Greece, some mitigation measures have been established and include:

- Insulation of bare cables with twisted ones aiming to prevent incidents of wildlife collision and electrocution in priority areas.
- Two pilot projects: Installation of insulating covers on poles & transformers in locations of high priority areas.
- Installation of man-made nests on power poles and bird rings during in cooperation with local units of Natural Environment & Climate Change Agency.
- Cooperation with the Hellenic Ornithological Society & NGOs within the framework of European LIFE Programs.
- Ongoing actions such as the Development of a Nature Positive Strategic Plan that will include: Priority actions including short-term and long-term initiatives per infrastructure/cluster; and governance model and monitoring mechanism, alongside specific KPIs to monitor performance and progress against actions and targets.

In Lithuania, offshore wind farms are subject to the Environmental Impact Assessment which will identify impacts and measures to avoid impacts, mitigate where avoidance is not possible and/or compensate for remaining impacts or damages. Installation of man-made nests on power poles and bird rings.

In France, several measures, as described below, are in place to mitigate the impact of the construction of energy infrastructure or especially to anticipate and early take into account environmental protection:

- As regards the protection of biodiversity, DSOs works with local nature associations and in partnership with the French NGO “Ligue pour la protection des oiseaux” (LPO), to define an action plan, as well as intervention periods that are not disruptive to birdlife. For example, there is a specific procedure for storks nests on grids infrastructure (e.g., often used in the Alsace region).
- In line with EU Regulation No 517/2014 of 16 April 2014, French DSOs reduce the use of equipment containing SF6 gas.
- When it is possible, priority is given to buried lines and cables in order to reduce the visual impact of networks but also increase grids resilience to extreme weather events. While building substations, DSOs use specific technics to reduce the ground footprint of the project.

- The Avoid, Reduce, Compensate (ERC) sequence was developed (not targeting energy infrastructure but applying to all projects and plans). Infrastructures projects must comply with the general obligations set in the ECR sequence.

In Spain there are no mitigation measures linked in particular to dedicated infrastructure areas. Mitigation measures are already contemplated in the national regulation, but as general provisions for individual projects that have an environmental impact.

In Sweden, no protective measures are used in the construction of power grids. Compensation measures are likely to increase in scope. It is very important that the compensation measures are directly linked to any potential damage to interest.

Question 11

Have any screening processes taken place in your jurisdiction that aim to identify if any project included in the dedicated infrastructure areas is highly likely to give rise to significant unforeseen adverse effects, in view of the environmental sensitivity of the geographical areas where it is located? Could you describe what such processes entailed and how they were set-up and what was assessed? Please describe the outcomes.

In Greece, the development of an interactive geospatial tool (GIS/kml) for spatial planning, aiming to identify and avoid high priority areas in the dedicated infrastructure areas, will contribute to environmental impacts minimization. Moreover, in the context of the Greek DSO HEDNOs strategic plan for biodiversity, guidelines and action plans will be developed for the planning phase of new projects in priority areas of biodiversity value.

In Spain, there are no dedicated infrastructure areas yet. The general procedure for environmental authorisation establishes a preliminary step in which projects subject to environmental assessment can request the administration a first opinion document on their content, level of detail and specifications to be included in the ordinary environmental procedure.

In France, there are no dedicated grid areas yet (although the designation process for renewable acceleration areas is ongoing). However, general procedures already exist for environmental assessments with processes designed to integrate environmental considerations into the development of a project or planning. A list of categories of projects, plans and programmes that must undergo an environmental assessment was drawn up (art. R. 122-2; art. 122-17 environment code) including hydroelectric power generation facilities; solar power generation facilities; **high and very high voltage overhead lines**. It requires an environmental impact assessment and a public consultation. DSOs chart the territories in order to determine whether a grid connection is located in a sensitive environmental area.

Moreover, grid infrastructures are subject to other procedures in marine natural parks, national and regional parks, nature reserves and listed sites as well as for Natura 2000.

Question 12

Have any appropriate compensatory measures been established in your jurisdiction following the screening process? How were they set up and what did they entail?

In Spain, compensatory measures are usually established in the ordinary process, but not in the screening process.

Question 13

What type of areas do you consider should be prioritised for developing energy infrastructure?

As the dedicated grid areas are meant to complement the renewable acceleration areas, the later ones should be examined when identifying the dedicated grid areas.

Furthermore, the areas considered should include those with renewable energy potential and where the grid capacity available is strained. Other areas with existing infrastructures (corridors) should also be designated grid areas from the outset. Future guidance should recognize that the growth of demand is a good integrator of renewable energy, as without demand, renewable energy would be curtailed, even if stored in batteries.

Industrial areas where there will be increasing electrification in the next years should also be considered.

Question 14

Are you using digital tools, maps or databases for identifying suitable areas for infrastructure buildout? Please explain and provide the relevant links.

DSOs use digital tools such as GIS system that contain functionalities for this purpose (e.g. in Greece and Spain). In Greece for instance, the GIS systems provide geographical mapping of the entire network infrastructure focusing on priority areas of high biodiversity value (proposed action being included in the biodiversity action plan).

Below please find some specific digital tools from national jurisdictions which could be used:

- In Lithuania, an interactive map of RES development opportunities was developed (link: <https://www.ena.lt/aei-pg-zemelapis/>) that provides all the most significant information about the possibilities of building a RES power plant in the intended location, or to check what the possibilities are and what restrictions may exist due to protected areas, cultural heritage, national security requirements or the availability of electricity infrastructure. This map was created by the Lithuania's Energy Agency with the state enterprise Centre of Registers, the Energy Ministry, the TSO LITGRID AB, the DSO AB Energijos skirstymo operatorius and the Military Cartography Centre of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. The map is updated periodically and contains notably information about electricity transmission and distribution network (e.g. free line capacities, capacities at transformer substations).
- In France, for grid capacity visualization, the Caparéseau website (link: <https://www.capareseau.fr/>) aims to inform about the opportunities for connecting electricity generation facilities to transmission and distribution systems. The information on reception capacities published on the website is provided for all generators. However, under the regional schemes for grid connection of renewable energies (S3RenR – link: <https://www.rte-france.com/projets/s3renr#LesschemasregionauxS3REnR>), system operators develop and reserve reception capacities for renewable energies. The Caparéseau website provides additional information for the reception of renewable energy and the advancement of these schemes. It was created by the TSO RTE in collaboration with French DSOs.

Question 15

Have you conducted studies and research on the environmental impact of grids and storage in your jurisdiction, in particular for establishing areas for grid and storage infrastructure, but not only? Please provide links to such studies or research.

In Greece, a study for addressing the biodiversity impact of national energy distribution network and action plans is in progress. The scope of the study is to identify the existing risks and impacts of the Greek DSO HEDNO's operations on biodiversity. Geographical mapping of the entire network infrastructure is being implemented focusing on priority areas of high biodiversity value in 5 regional areas of HEDNO's operations, combining ecologically sensitive areas and network data.

In Spain, environmental studies are generally carried out when required by existing regulations. No studies for this type of area have been carried out yet.

Question 16

How has the public been involved in the designation of dedicated infrastructure areas or zonal planning for energy infrastructure in your jurisdiction? Is public participation/stakeholders' engagement an issue? Please describe your experience.

In Spain, the DSO Iberdrola tries to facilitate access to information on the most important projects by publishing environmental studies on our websites.

In Lithuania, according to the Government's Resolution on the Approval of the Procedure for Strategic Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programs, the public is a participant in the strategic environmental impact assessment process. In the environmental impact assessment process, the public is also a participant in accordance with national legislation. The public, as a participant in a process, examines the screening and assessment scoping documents and assessment reports, provides conclusions on these documents and proposals on the assessment scope.

In general, although most Member States have not yet designed such dedicated grid areas, there is already ongoing experience of public engagement in grid infrastructure development projects as visible in the examples below. More practices can be also found in the Commission's Ten Guiding Principles for Enhanced Public Engagement on Development of Energy Infrastructure Projects (endorsed by the Commission on 6 November 2024).

Examples of public engagement and consultations organized on grid development projects:

- In Slovakia, the DSO Západoslovenská distribučná engaged in public consultation processes via an online platform, as part of their permitting processes under their European Project of Common Interest (PCI) smart grid project named ACON. It leads to positive results in enabling dialogue and raising awareness and acceptance among the public impacted by the development of grid infrastructure and resulting in a lack of opposition to the project. Public consultations were assessed as a 'non regret' investment and will be used in future projects.
- In France, in compliance with rules set in national law, public consultations are organised on TSO and DSO grid development works for lines or substations of high and very high voltage. These consultations known as "Concertation Fontaine" are organised with all actors of the concerned local territory to raise awareness on the technical and economic need of the project. These consultations involved various stakeholders from local governments, elected representatives, NGOs and local population giving them the possibility to engage in consultation meetings.

- In Germany, information on grid development is made publicly available in a transparent way in compliance with the Article 14d of the German National Energy Act based on Article 32 of the Electricity Directive (2019/944/EU). The German Network Development Plans of electricity DSOs can also easily be accessed via «VNB-digital», the nation-wide platform ensuring accessibility and transparency of information. The online platform provides an easy and centralised access to the German DSOs' network development plans as well as information on grid connection to the DSO network (Accessible online: <https://www.vnbdigital.de>).

Question 17

Additional input you would like to submit

First, as Art. 15e mentioned that Member States '*shall consult the relevant infrastructure system operators*' when preparing the plans to designate the dedicated grid areas, further information should thus be provided regarding how this will be implemented.

Moreover, to designate dedicated areas in advance, a framework document should be implemented, including a series of guidelines and compensatory measures to be met by projects that belong to the area. The following supporting guidance could also be underlined: the replacement of the Environmental Impact Assessment process with a "responsible declaration" of alignment with this framework document, the introduction of a positive silence principle when deadlines expire for designated areas, allowing the project to continue.

Furthermore, areas for grid and storage infrastructure should incorporate zones of expected increase in demand. Demand increase contributes to reducing renewable curtailments and thus, integrating renewables.

Finally, within the designated areas, the site assessment should be fully or partially decided and legally binding and should not be subject to appeal at a later stage. For example, if a DSO applies for a line concession for a power line that affects a Natura 2000 area, the assessment against the protection should already be decided with the designation of the area. The Natura 2000 area should therefore not affect the location within the framework of the concession assessment. Species protection (mainly birds) should also be decided at an earlier stage to avoid delaying or stopping the power line project. For the designation of areas to have any effect on the permitting processes, the environmental and climate benefits of the project must be significantly considered in the environmental assessment.

About DSO Entity

DSO Entity is a technical expert body mandated by the Electricity Market Regulation (2019/943/EU) to promote the functioning of the electricity market and to facilitate the energy transition. DSO Entity is representing around 830 diverse Distribution System Operators (DSOs) connecting 250 million households to the electricity grid in 27 Member States. Among DSO Entity's core tasks are the development of technical rules for the electricity system in the form of Network Codes together with the mandated organisation of the Transmission System Operators (ENTSO-E), the facilitation of the integration of renewables and the promotion of the digitalisation and smartening of the grid as well as sharing knowledge and best practices.