

# Italy energised by Med's first offshore wind farm



**Italy**  
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Italy is close to completing what is believed to be the first offshore wind farm in the Mediterranean as it tries to free itself from dependence on Russian gas.

The Beleolico farm of ten turbines off the southern port of Taranto will generate enough power to supply the needs of 60,000 people. Backers say they hope it will contribute to the industrial regeneration of the city, which is blighted by unemployment and pollution from Europe's largest steel works.

Italy imports 40 per cent of its gas from Russia and is looking to increase imports from Algeria and step up electricity generation from coal and oil. Renewable energy sources will make a key contribution, but it will take at least three years to replace Russian gas with alternative sources of energy, Roberto Cingolani, the ecological transition minister, told parliament yesterday.

Five turbines are said to have been mounted and the remaining five are due to be completed next month. It is due to become operational in May.

Wind farms offer a particular challenge in the Mediterranean because of its busy sea lanes and exposure to climate change. The depth of the water, typically greater than in the North Sea, can also be a problem.

Water in the Beleolico area varies from 4 to 18 metres in depth, requiring the use of a Dutch installation vessel able to cope with the varying depths.

The Beleolico project began in 2008 and faced opposition from the Puglia regional government, the landscape superintendency because of its potential impact on the sea view, and from Taranto city council. Falck Renewables, a company planning a floating wind farm off the nearby Salento coast, agreed to move the project further out to sea after objections from the mayors of tourist resorts such as Capo d'Otranto and Santa Maria di Leuca. The company said the turbines would be kept at least eight miles from the shore, despite the extra cost.

There are plans to create a floating wind farm off the coast of Sicily, which would generate energy for 3.4 million families and create hundreds of jobs.

Those involved in the industry are hoping that the combination of global warming and the war in Ukraine will slash bureaucratic red tape for land and sea-based wind power.

L'Italia vicina al completamento del primo parco eolico offshore del Mediterraneo

