



AYOP PRESENTS

Two ladies and two gentlemen

How to ensure quality employees for offshore wind in the future...

THE GENTLEMEN

Joost Pellis – Strategic manager Renewables
Atlas Professionals and AYOP member

Edward Straus – Programme manager
Nova College and AYOP member

THE LADIES

Willemijn van Meurs – Development manager onshore wind, interim Hollandse Kust Zuid
Vattenfall and AYOP member

Dorothy Winters – Programme manager offshore wind
AYOP, the network association in offshore energy

Offshore wind is fascinating, diverse and challenging; the perfect working environment for people with a heart for a cleaner world, an interest in adventure and technology, and an ability to work independently. But how do you engage them in the first place? And how can we ensure there are good links between education and practice so that people have the right skills for the job? In other words: what can education, industry and recruitment agencies do to ensure a sufficient influx of good employees for offshore wind?

– ‘There is a way to go yet, but we are making good progress.’ –

Let’s start with a practical question: how is employment currently in the offshore wind sector?

Willemijn: ‘I can only speak on behalf of Vattenfall but it isn’t bad. We have around 50 maintenance vacancies to fill for our Hollandse Kust Zuid offshore windfarm in the near future. That doesn’t give a comprehensive overview as I’ve no idea how our subcontractors are doing with regards to recruitment. Joost can probably answer this question from a broader perspective.’

Joost: ‘Looking at the entirety of companies involved in offshore wind and the lifecycle of wind farms there will be quite a few people required for the development and installation alone. As the longest phase which takes around 30 years, Operations & Maintenance involves hundreds of jobs – and that does not include the developments after 2030.’



We have also done some research on the topic. Our region will be requiring more than a hundred FTEs a year in the short term. The work is available and will only increase. But how about the skills? What do we need?

Joost: 'This is very much subject to change. Where the emphasis used to be on mechanical expertise, there has been a shift to electrotechnical knowledge and skills in recent years. We also see soft skills becoming increasingly important. In other words: how motivated, independent, responsible and disciplined are you? We've addressed this by subjecting candidates to a specially designed assessment. As a result, professionals from other fields who would otherwise likely be rejected now fit in much better with what we need.'

Willemijn: 'And it is obviously important to be physically suited to the job. This is not for people who are claustrophobic or get seasick easily. But if you are motivated and have the required skills, there is a fantastic job waiting.'

Edward: 'At Nova, we try to align our educational programme to the knowledge and skills required in the industry as much as possible. We have established two trajectories in this respect: one within the regular educational programme, which we have enriched, and one that involves a facultative programme that we're also offering to professionals from other industries and current staff. In addition, we've made a deal with a related training institute, Scalda, to exchange teaching material. In principle, this means we can furnish certified people with the required knowledge and skills in the short term. There is one issue though: we have to attract these people, these youngsters. This is of the essence. After all, we can offer great education, but if people aren't interested in the wind sector because they don't know what it involves, then we have nothing to work with. This is where the industry itself can play an important role.'

'In 10 years, human capital should be supporting developments rather than holding us back.'

Professionals from other sectors have been mentioned a few times. How important are they?

Joost: 'Very. The sector needs experience. Add in the fact that only 33% of intermediate vocational students graduate from their studies on average and it is even clearer why professionals from other sectors with work experience and the necessary technical and personal skills under their belt have our interest.'

Edward: 'Wow, that is a very low figure. Ours are much higher at around 95%, especially in the trajectories we co-create with companies. This brings me back to what I said earlier: the industry can play a significant role, both with regards to promoting the field and by providing internships.'

Joost: 'I totally agree. And not just the industry – intermediaries also benefit from a healthy balance between supply & demand and should play their part. From our position this works both ways: although we're seen as a knowledge and collaboration partner to companies, we have the same relationship with educational institutes. That

is why you'll often find me in schools and colleges providing information and telling students how interesting and diverse a career in wind is and how good their future prospects would be. This is a task all intermediaries should take on, even if they don't directly benefit. It is vital for the future.'

Can AYOP play an important part in this process?

Joost: 'Absolutely. You bring members together and are the perfect party to share the story of offshore wind far and wide.'

Edward: 'I would personally encourage AYOP to organise more of these meetings as it is a great way to keep each other sharp. Things aren't all bad and we're definitely making good progress, although there is a way to go yet. Let me reiterate: internships, work, promotion. Industry, are you hearing me?'

'I'm happy to be contributing to the energy transition.'

Willemijn: 'Together we have to prevent any shortfall in staff. As said before there's plenty of work and more on the horizon. If I look at the developments at Vattenfall, both in the Netherlands and abroad, no one has to worry about having a job later.'

Edward: 'Well, to be honest, I am slightly worried. Especially with regards to the number of internships and the required GWO safety certification. How are we going to deal with that? I mean: what is a person without certification allowed to do? Exactly: not a thing. The certification should therefore be included in the educational programmes. Only we can't afford it. And we can't ask students to pay for it themselves either. I would think this is something the companies should pay for. I know it's risky but ultimately they would be investing in their own future.'

I know some employers are willing to refund the costs once someone is employed, but it is indeed a problem for which there is no ready answer available. Within AYOP we are looking to see whether this is something we can tackle together, for instance, by establishing a fund. It's a tricky issue indeed but let's move on for now and explore where we will be in 10 years' time...

Willemijn: 'I expect the sector to have reached maturity by then. Wind will be a strong industry and a popular field in which to work.'

Joost: 'I agree. I also hope to be able to say that all the effort we put into it actually contributed to a cleaner world. In other words: that human capital is supporting developments in the energy transition rather than holding us back.'

Edward: 'Exactly, that's what it's all about: contributing to a solution to a social problem. This is something that we are very much focused on at Nova, including by linking various 'green' studies.'

Willemijn: 'A healthy planet was also an important factor for me to enter this field. I would be happy if I were able to say that I contributed by working on the energy transition.'

This was the third in a series of conversations exploring the latest developments in our sector. If there's a subject you would like to see discussed contact Sylvia Boer via sylvia@ayop.com.

AYOP

A dynamic association of over 100 companies, regional government bodies and research/education institutes active in offshore oil & gas and wind energy in the North Sea Canal region. Members have a strong focus on offshore wind maintenance (including cable logistics), drilling projects for gas extraction, changes to and maintenance of work vessels and platforms, and the disassembly of offshore structures and vessels. In other words, AYOP represents the entire offshore industry chain.