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■ Offshore hydrogen pipeline: GASCADE and Fluxys step up plans

System operators apply for PCI status for ambitious North Sea hydrogen infrastructure project

Kassel/Brussels. GASCADE and Fluxys have applied to the European Commission for Project of Common Interest (PCI) status for the AquaDuctus project, marking a major step forward in their plans for an offshore pipeline for green hydrogen in the North Sea. The move by the two infrastructure operators highlights the project's importance for the hydrogen ramp-up.

"The offshore pipeline, which will be over 400 km long when completed, will become a linchpin of Germany's and Europe's future offshore hydrogen infrastructure," explains GASCADE Managing Director Christoph von dem Bussche, emphasising the project's European, interconnecting character. That is because the pipeline is designed as a 'backbone', able to collect hydrogen from multiple production sites while also offering the potential to link up with other international hydrogen flows through the North Sea. Hydrogen will be taken to the German coast via the offshore pipeline and fed into the onshore hydrogen network there. In this way, AquaDuctus will provide large-scale offshore hydrogen infrastructure in the German North Sea for hydrogen to be imported into Germany.

GASCADE and Fluxys have ambitious plans for this project. The first step will see the SEN-1 hydrogen wind farm connected to AquaDuctus, with flows to start in 2030. In subsequent years, wind farms further offshore in Germany's exclusive economic zone may be linked up as well as hydrogen infrastructure operated by other North Sea countries. By 2035, the offshore pipeline is to develop into a main hydrogen corridor carrying up to one million tonnes of hydrogen a year into Germany. Based on the gas and hydrogen package currently being negotiated at European level, the two long-standing transmission system operators plan the AquaDuctus offshore pipeline as a regulated open access infrastructure available to all future operators of hydrogen wind farms, thereby strengthening security of supply in the future.

"We firmly believe that the AquaDuctus offshore pipeline will be a key element of Europe's future energy supply picture and a major advance in the drive towards climate neutrality," says Fluxys Managing Director and CEO Pascal De Buck. The offshore pipeline will make a substantial contribution to security of supply by diversifying Europe's hydrogen supply sources. "Our specific plans for AquaDuctus will allow Germany's federal government to put in place concrete actions following up the efforts it has made on hydrogen with European partners such as for example Norway or within the framework of the Esbjerg Declaration," says von dem Bussche, underscoring the feasibility of the project.

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Studies identify up to 100 GW of hydrogen production potential in the German and European North Sea and view an integrated European offshore pipeline network as the ideal transport solution. "With our AquaDuctus offshore pipeline, we want to jointly enable this potential to be leveraged," explain the two managing directors.

A comprehensive feasibility study for the project has been successfully completed. The study examined and confirmed the technical and planning feasibility of all phases of the project. Commercial aspects, marketing potential, pricing and regulatory design options were also analysed.

About GASCADE

■ GASCADE Gastransport GmbH independently operates a gas pipeline network throughout Germany. Based in Kassel, the company offers its customers state-of-the-art and competitive transport services for hydrogen and other gases in the heart of Europe via the company's 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 active in several specific onshore and offshore hydrogen projects.

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About Fluxys

■ Headquartered in Belgium, Fluxys is a fully independent infrastructure group with 1,300 employees active in gas transmission & storage and liquefied natural gas terminalling. Through its associated companies across the world, Fluxys operates 12,000 kilometres of pipeline and liquefied natural gas terminals totalling a yearly regasification capacity of 380 TWh. Among Fluxys' subsidiaries is Euronext listed Fluxys Belgium, owner and operator of the infrastructure for gas transmission & storage and liquefied natural gas terminalling in Belgium.

As a purpose-led company, Fluxys together with its stakeholders contributes to a better society by shaping a bright energy future. Building on the unique assets of its infrastructure and its commercial and technical expertise, Fluxys is committed to transporting hydrogen, biomethane or any other carbon-neutral energy carrier as well as CO₂, accommodating the capture, usage and storage of the latter.

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