

Capacity Reservations for Hydrogen Transport in the Core Network



Hydrogen core network operators publish principles for capacity reservations from the beginning of 2026

European network operators have announced the initial user commitment processes for marketing hydrogen capacities, set to begin in 2026. At the same time, the hydrogen core network operators in Germany will start marketing corresponding capacities. This information package aims to provide the market with preliminary details on the upcoming process and to signal a positive outlook for market growth through timely coordination.

To enhance certainty for the expanding hydrogen market, the development of the hydrogen core network and the import corridors, hydrogen core network operators will offer hydrogen capacity reservations for the first time at the start of 2026. This initiative will allow market participants to secure necessary entry and exit capacities for commercial transactions, providing added assurance for the development of their hydrogen projects.

The principles of the capacity reservation concept are outlined below. Additional details will be shared in advance of the reservation process.

Regulatory framework and current need for action

The key regulations governing the hydrogen market (cf. the BNetzA* procedures for WaKandA and WasABi) are still in the finalisation stage, but the BNetzA has indicated that they will be published soon. Once finalised, these regulations will be incorporated into the ongoing efforts to develop a common standard contract for network access, specifically through the drafting of a hydrogen cooperation agreement by the hydrogen network operators. As part of this initiative, the operators aim to establish a uniform model contract for capacity reservations.

The ability for the hydrogen core network operators to offer firm and freely allocable hydrogen capacity on a binding basis will gradually increase as the hydrogen core network develops. For clusters created after 2029, for which capacities cannot be reserved currently, this initial marketing launch will not pose any disadvantages. There will be sufficient capacities available, as per network development plan, for the later-completed sections of the hydrogen core network.

*BNetzA: Bundesnetzagentur (Federal Network Agency)

The methodology for allocating capacity

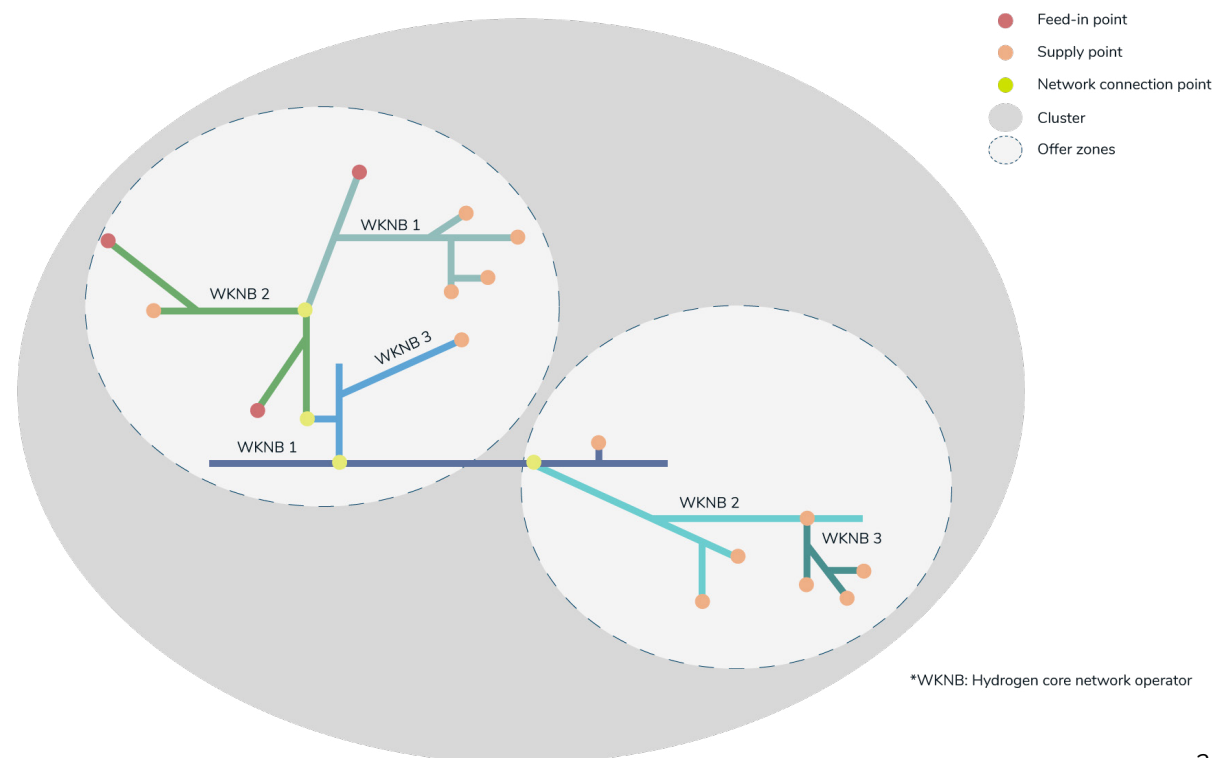
The reservation concept allows market participants to initially book firm and freely allocable hydrogen capacities within clusters at designated points in offer zones, where these capacities are offered competitively.

The firm and freely allocable hydrogen capacity FWK facilitates path-independent hydrogen transport within the German hydrogen market area. Initially, this market area is not fully interconnected in terms of network topology and is divided into clusters. The allocability of the FWK is initially restricted to these clusters. As soon as physical connections between clusters are established, cross-cluster hydrogen transport is feasible. As clusters gradually integrate, the range of FWK will expand progressively, eventually covering the entire German hydrogen market area.

Clusters are defined by their composition of networks linked through flow mechanics. As these clusters gradually merge, they are forming a cohesive, topologically connected infrastructure for hydrogen transport. Within these clusters, capacities are allocated and marketed in designated offer zones.

Offer zones are defined sub-areas within a cluster. The capacity of an offer zone (“zone capacity”) represents the initial amount of competing entry or exit capacity in this zone without restricting the reach of the product in the cluster. Zone capacity is provided separately for entry points and exit points.

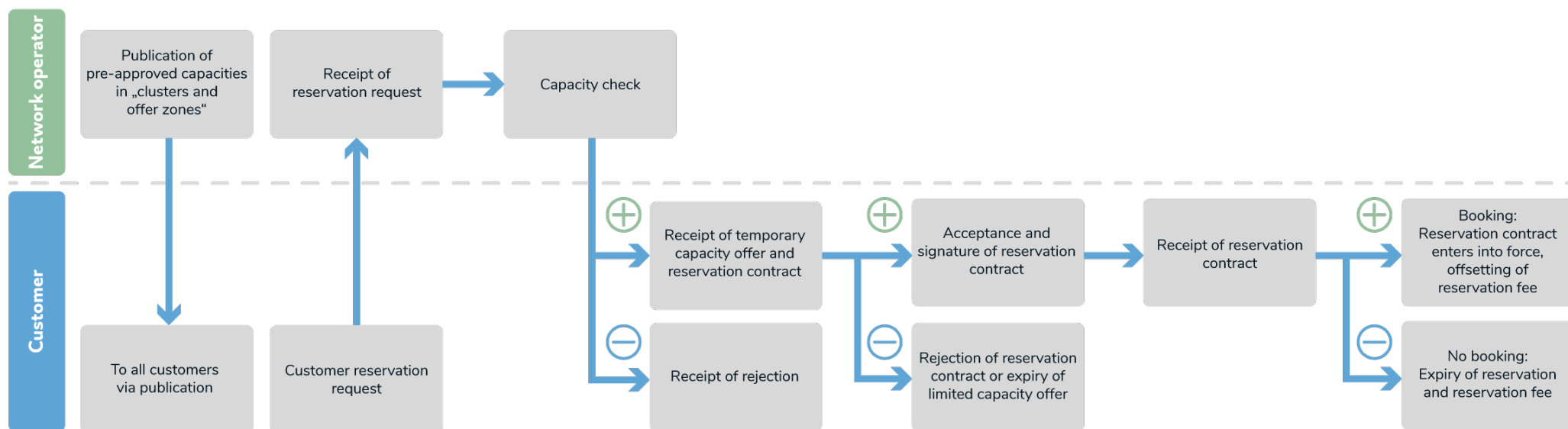
The total amount of marketable FWK cannot exceed the provided zone capacity. FWK offered within a offer zone can be marketed at every entry- or exit-point within this offer zone without additional flow-mechanical testing. The concept of offer zones is introduced to ensure the highest possible, flexible, and demand-oriented capacity offer within the clusters. This is necessary because many future entry and exit points and their requirements are not yet known. The offer zones can be adjusted over time to meet demand as the market ramps up.



The reservation process

Market participants can initially request entry or exit capacity from the hydrogen core network operators for network points within a cluster to facilitate access to their network. If capacity is available, the market participant can promptly finalize a reservation contract. Upon signing the contract, a reservation fee is due. This reservation will later be converted into capacity bookings, with the reservation fee credited against the transmission fees. Reservations can be made at various network points within the cluster, including connection points to electrolyzers, consumption facilities, and interconnection points to neighbouring foreign market areas.

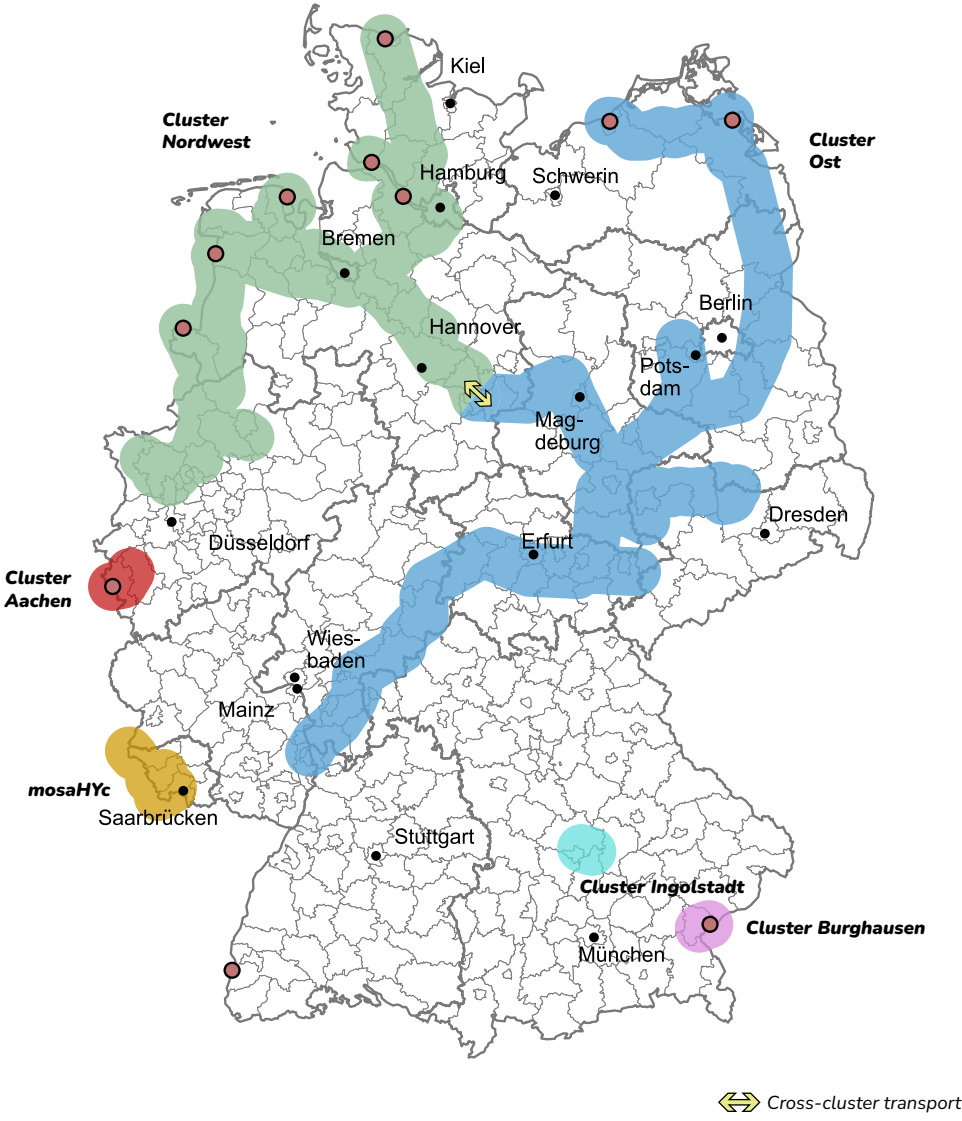
If market participants request transport that involves a transition between two clusters, the hydrogen core network operators will provide eligible customers with transport options for reservation at the cluster transition, as long as it is technically feasible. The so-called cross-cluster transport (Clusterübergangstransport - CÜT) enables fixed transports across individual clusters. By using a CÜT, FWK booked in the relevant cluster can also be used for transport to the other cluster. Eligible customers are those who have contracted an entry and exit reservation in the connected clusters. No additional reservation fee is charged for the CÜT.



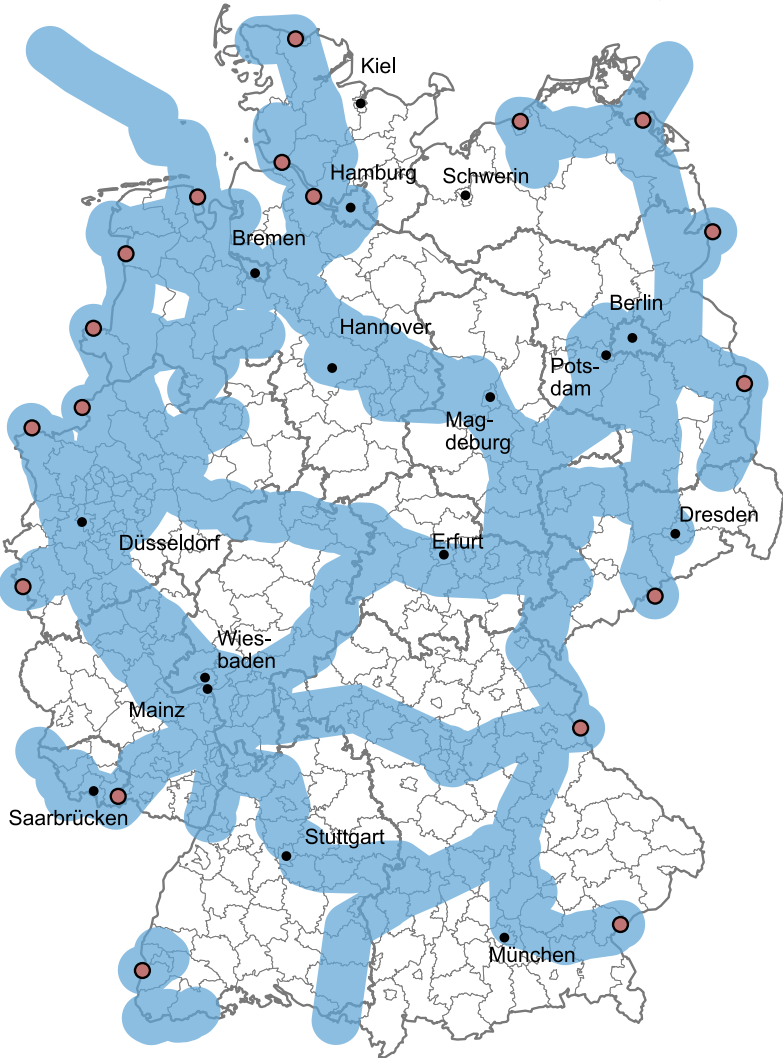
Note: The network connection agreement with the respective network operator is a prerequisite for the establishment of the network connection point

The schematic representation of the clusters as of December 31, 2029, on the path to the hydrogen core network

31.12.2029



approved target core network



Next steps for reserving capacity

The hydrogen core network operators intend to publish a reservation contract along with the capacities of the clusters and offer zones for the years 2026-2030 before the end of this year. These capacities will reflect the potential of the planned infrastructure and can later also be reserved beyond 2030. The hydrogen core network operators will initiate the above-mentioned capacity reservation process of the hydrogen core network at a uniform date in early 2026. Existing contracts between network users and network operators remain unaffected.

The network operators will gradually release information on capacities and cluster developments for the years following 2030 on a rolling basis, in alignment with the German network development plan.

The hydrogen core network operators clarify that the information in this brochure includes projections, reflects the current planning status, and is intended solely to inform market participants. The information does not constitute a binding basis for investment decisions. The hydrogen core network operators do not guarantee future developments, as forecasts carry inherent uncertainties. Specifically, completion and commissioning dates are based on past experiences with natural gas network construction. Additionally, the regulatory framework for hydrogen transport in Germany is still under development. Therefore, concepts, processes, dates, and figures cannot be guaranteed, and the offer may change. Liability claims against the hydrogen core network operators for any damages resulting directly or indirectly from the use of this information are excluded to the extent permitted by law.