

Report lays bare the challenges faced in reaching 2050 emissions reduction target

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An environmental impact assessment for the shipping industry released by two European agencies has shown clearly the challenge faced by the IMO and its members if its goal of climate neutrality by 2050 were to be met.

EMTER (European Maritime Transport Environmental Report) is the first up-to-date and comprehensive overview of the environmental transport sector in the EU. It is a joint report produced by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and the European Environment Agency (EEA).

The EMTER report contains an analysis of the environmental pressures exerted by the maritime transport sector, providing information on the relevant EU and international environmental standards.

It also describes the current and future actions to reduce the sector's impact on our environment.

EMTER states that the maritime sector makes up about 14% of greenhouse gas emissions from transport within the EU – more than previously estimated – making it the third-biggest emitter behind road vehicles (which account for 71%) and aviation.

EU shipping is forecast to more than double by 2050 (2005 base), and EMTER warns that current proposals to curb fossil-fuel pollution might not be enough to bring the industry in line with the bloc's goal to be climate-neutral by 2050.

The report said that member states needed to reduce transport emissions by 90% in order to achieve that target. Other issues highlighted by the report concerned air pollution and underwater noise that can affect marine life.

Virginijus Sinkevicius, European Commissioner for Environment, said that “maritime transport is expected to increase in the coming years and unless we act now, the sector will produce more and more greenhouse gas emissions, air pollutants and underwater noise. A smooth but rapid transition of the sector is crucial to meet the objectives of the European Green Deal and move toward carbon neutrality.”

The European Commission has proposed to include shipping within its Emissions Trading System that will require shippers to buy permits for their CO₂ output. It also plans a FuelEU Maritime initiative that aims to boost the uptake of sustainable fuels by ratcheting up yearly reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions from 2% beginning in 2025 to 75% by 2050. These proposals have still to be approved by member states and the European Parliament.

The report also provides an overview of potential alternatives to traditional fossil fuels such as hydrogen and biofuel. The analysis shows that most ships calling into the EU have reduced their speed by 20% compared to 2008, helping to cut emissions.

<http://emsa.europa.eu/emter.html>