



A (methane) blind spot

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The European Industrial Maritime Strategy (EIMS) sets out an ambitious vision for the future of Europe's maritime sector. Rather than viewing decarbonisation as a compliance exercise driven by environmental regulation, it recognises the transition as an industrial transformation that will shape the EU's competitiveness, technological leadership, and economic resilience for decades to come.

That framing is welcome but incomplete. Building the industries that will underpin net-zero shipping requires investment in fuels, infrastructure, manufacturing capacity, and innovation ecosystems. That said, one important element of the decarbonisation challenge remains largely absent from the strategy: methane emissions from maritime operations.

Focus without overlooking

This omission matters because methane abatement represents one of the few opportunities to achieve significant climate benefits in the near term, while simultaneously strengthening Europe's maritime innovation base and competitiveness.

The EIMS rightly prioritises alternative fuels and the industrial ecosystems needed to support them. It promotes renewable fuels, clean technology deployment, and supply-chain development, including support for biomethane and renewable gas markets. These measures are essential if shipping is to reach long-term climate goals.

However, fuel transitions are inherently slow. Ships remain in service for decades, and investment cycles stretch over many years. With new bunkers under development, today's fleet continues to operate, and liquefied natural gas (LNG) remains an important part of that reality. Approximately one-quarter of newly ordered vessels are

LNG-capable, meaning methane emissions associated with their operation will remain relevant for many years to come.

This creates a practical policy challenge. Europe cannot focus exclusively on the fuels of tomorrow while overlooking emissions reductions that can be delivered from the fleet that already exists. And methane deserves particular attention because of its disproportionate short-term warming impact. As the second-largest contributor to global warming after carbon dioxide, methane has a global warming potential approximately 28 times greater than CO₂ over a 100-year timescale, meaning even relatively small releases can significantly erode the climate advantages expected from LNG as a lower-carbon marine fuel. A 45% reduction in global methane emissions by 2030 could, for example, avoid around 0.3°C of warming by the 2040s, making methane abatement one of the fastest and most effective near-term climate mitigation opportunities.

As the global LNG-fuelled fleet continues to expand alongside growing LNG supply and infrastructure, reducing methane slip will be essential to ensuring LNG delivers its intended climate benefits across the value chain and remains a credible bunker option while zero-emission alternatives are scaled up.

Encouraging industrial innovation

Across Europe and internationally, tech developers are bringing forward systems

capable of measuring methane emissions with increasing accuracy while developing practical abatement technologies that can substantially reduce methane slip from engines and on-board operations. These solutions are progressing from laboratory concepts towards commercial deployment, supported by collaborative research programmes and industrial partnerships.

The Methane Abatement in Maritime Innovation Initiative (MAMII) illustrates this potential. Working with partners across the shipping industry, fuel suppliers, engine manufacturers, technology providers, and academia, MAMII has helped identify and evaluate emerging methane measurement and abatement solutions while fostering collaboration among tech developers, ship operators, and policymakers. Early demonstrations suggest that practical methane emissions reduction technologies are becoming increasingly viable for commercial shipping.

This is precisely the type of industrial innovation that the EIMS seeks to encourage. The strategy emphasises demonstration projects, tech deployment, industrial scaling, investment mobilisation and market creation. These policy priorities provide a fertile framework for accelerating methane-abatement technologies from pilot projects to commercial application across the European fleet.

Yet, methane emissions are never elevated as a strategic priority. Instead,



they remain embedded within broader discussions on fuel transition and emissions reduction, without dedicated policy attention. Treating methane emissions as simply another component of shipping decarbonisation risks delaying action on one of the fastest available climate interventions. Dedicated recognition would encourage improved monitoring methodologies, targeted innovation funding, harmonised regulatory approaches, and stronger incentives for technology deployment. These measures could deliver measurable emissions reductions well before complete fuel transitions occur.

Complementary approaches

The economic case is equally compelling. Europe has an opportunity to establish global leadership in methane measurement, monitoring, and abatement technologies at a time when international attention to methane emissions is growing rapidly.

European companies, research organisations, and tech developers are already building expertise in this field. Supporting commercial deployment would strengthen industrial competitiveness while creating export opportunities for solutions that are likely to be needed across global shipping markets. This aligns closely with the broader EIMS objectives, which seek to position Europe as a leader in clean maritime technologies rather than simply a consumer of innovations developed elsewhere. The challenge is therefore no longer whether

methane emissions can be addressed, but whether policy frameworks evolve quickly enough to support widespread adoption.

Europe's industrial strategy should not view methane abatement as competing with investment in zero-emission fuels. The two approaches are complementary: long-term decarbonisation depends on transforming the fuel system, but near-term climate progress depends on reducing emissions wherever practical solutions already exist. Industrial policy works best when it accelerates technologies that are ready to scale. Methane abatement increasingly fits that description.

Industrial strategy for climate action

The European Industrial Maritime Strategy has created the architecture for innovation, investment, and industrial deployment. What it lacks is an explicit recognition that methane abatement deserves strategic priority in its own right. Without that signal, one of the fastest opportunities to reduce the climate impact of shipping risks being overshadowed by longer-term fuel transition debates.

A practical roadmap already exists. In its report, *Turning Methane Abatement into a Competitive Advantage: A Five-Point Action Plan for the EU*, MAMII argues that Europe should focus on the following priorities: explicitly recognising methane abatement as a strategic objective within the EU maritime climate policy; enabling greater use of verified real-world emissions data; scaling investment and financial support for methane abatement technologies through EU funding and financial incentives; creating a multi-stakeholder platform for methane abatement trials and data sharing in the maritime sector; and strengthening Europe's leadership in the development of international methane measurement and abatement standards.

These recommendations align closely with the ambitions of the EIMS and would help translate industrial strategy into measurable climate action. If Europe wants to lead the next generation of maritime innovation, it should not only invest in the fuels of the future but also seize the immediate opportunity to cut methane emissions from the fleet that is already sailing. □

Led by Safetytech Accelerator (itself established by Lloyd's Register) since 2022, the Methane Abatement in Maritime Innovation Initiative (MAMII) has been launched to address methane emissions from ships using liquefied natural gas (LNG) as fuel. The Initiative aims to reduce the environmental impact of LNG by reducing methane slip to near zero. To that end, MAMII calls for universal standards for measuring methane emissions from ships to address regulatory voids and urges regulatory frameworks to incentivise the development and uptake of methane abatement technologies. Visit safetytechaccelerator.org/mamii-innovationinitiative to learn more.