

Summary

Shipping emissions have increased by approximately 70% since 1990 and represented 2.7% of global CO₂ emissions in 2012. If these emissions were reported as a country, maritime transport would rank between Japan and Germany on a table of CO₂ emitters. Under current policies, IMO GHG study forecasts shipping CO₂ emissions to increase by 50% to 250% by 2050, which would then represent between 6% to 14% of total global emissions. While emissions from other sectors have started declining or are looking to peak in 2020, none of the “business as usual” scenarios for shipping foresee a decline in shipping emissions before 2050. The EU has promised measures for shipping emissions three times since 2009 and the Commission’s communication on Energy Union made it clear that all sources of emissions should contribute to the EU 2030 reduction target.

EU commitments on shipping emissions: no real action so far

The EU has achieved little in reducing international shipping GHG emissions to date. This must change in the post-2020 world if we are to meet our climate targets.

The EU’s 2009 climate and energy package set a deadline for the Commission to come up with a proposal covering emissions from all sectors of the economy – including international shipping – in case there were no international measures by 2011. The deadline has long passed and international shipping is still the only transport sector and one of the very few in the EU economy not contributing to EU emissions reductions. The 2011 Transport White Paper calls for an emissions reduction of at least 40% by 2050, and if feasible 50% compared to 2005 levels. When introducing the monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) proposal in 2013, the Commission indicated that the adoption of a reduction target and implementing measures including market-based measures (MBMs) would follow. The MRV Regulation has now been agreed and enters into force in 2015; it becomes operational in 2018.

The inclusion of shipping emissions in the climate and energy package’s 40% reduction commitment by 2030 is a step in the right direction but the Commission now needs to propose concrete measures to achieve this for shipping.

IMO process is too slow and has delivered too little, too late

The Commission said in its communication on the Paris strategy that the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) should come forward with reduction measures by 2016. International action is necessary. However, the IMO has consistently failed to meet its Kyoto obligation to limit and reduce shipping emissions.

The EU took a cautious step by starting with MRV in the expectation that the IMO would deliver. That has not happened. The IMO has no intention of setting a target to reduce shipping emissions and debate on MBM proposals has been frozen for three years. The shipping industry resists the adoption not only of a reduction target and relevant measures but also an EU-style MRV global system – claiming that shipping is not part of the problem but a mitigation measure itself.

The IMO did agree a design efficiency standard (EEDI) for all new ships built in 2013 onwards. However, this measure will take a generation to affect the entire fleet and will deliver too little. A recent study found that the design efficiency of new ships has deteriorated by 10% since 1990, so the EEDI will in effect only bring new ships back to that level. Moreover, the Third IMO GHG study (2014) shows that efficiency measures alone will not curb shipping emissions. Even assuming a 60% efficiency improvement in 2050, emissions are still likely to exceed today's level by more than 1,000 Mton.

Measures urgently needed under the 2030 target and Energy Union

Since European maritime transport activities are expected to increase by 8% in 2020, 15% in 2030, and 39% in 2050, the EU should now make it clear that it intends to deliver shipping emissions reductions within its 2030 commitment. It should subject shipping to the 40% EU reduction target and establish relevant measures to do deliver this. The most straightforward approach is to include international shipping in the Energy Union legislative proposal and either make it subject to the ETS rules from 2021 or, by way of derogation, permit shipping companies to instead make a voluntary contribution to a compensation fund or join a target-based compensation fund as set out in the Commission's 2013 communication on shipping.

Further information

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