

## Some EU countries are trying to weaken the bloc's planned law to cut methane emissions

Some European Union countries are trying to weaken the bloc's planned law to cut methane emissions in the oil and gas sector, documents show, weeks after the EU pledged at the COP27 climate conference to do more to tackle the potent greenhouse gas.

Methane is the second biggest cause of climate change after carbon dioxide and has a far higher warming effect, meaning rapid cuts in methane emissions are crucial if the world is to avoid severe climate change.

The European Commission last year proposed legislation to require oil and gas companies in Europe find and fix leaky infrastructure allowing methane to escape. Checks would be required every three months, starting six months after the regulation takes effect.

But EU countries, who are negotiating the law, want to delay the first survey to 12 months, and then set different timelines – in some cases less frequent – for checking different types of infrastructure, according to their latest draft compromise.

For example, compressor stations and liquefied natural gas terminals would be surveyed every six months, valve stations every 12 months and transmission pipelines every two years.

Countries also want to exempt deep wells from a requirement to check inactive oil and gas wells for methane leaks, and to change a weekly requirement for inspecting gas flare stacks to a monthly one, the draft showed.

### **Hungary and Romania requested weaker rules**

The draft reflects negotiations among the 27 EU member countries, and did not indicate which states backed the changes.

EU documents detailing the negotiating positions of various countries, however, showed Hungary and Romania had requested weaker rules.

In one document, Hungary said the EU plan to immediately end routine gas flaring would represent a “cost and timing issue for the industry”, and should be delayed to 2030.

Hungary's representation to the EU declined to comment on the negotiations.

A Romanian source told Reuters the country was working to draft measures “in line with our climate ambitions, technically feasible, while ensuring that the implementation calendar is realistic”.

One senior EU diplomat said the changes should not dilute the law's ambition, and sought to address some countries' concerns about the cost and feasibility of the rules.

### **Global methane pledge**

Campaigners warned that weaker EU rules would dent the bloc's green credentials, noting Canada, Nigeria and others are advancing methane regulations that are, in some cases,

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more ambitious.

"Brussels now runs the risk of getting methane legislation that looks 10 years out of date," said Jonathan Banks, global methane director at the non-profit Clean Air Task Force.

Alongside the United States, the EU leads the Global Methane Pledge of 150 countries aiming to cut methane emissions 30% by 2030. The EU was also among oil and gas market participants who pledged at last month's COP27 climate summit to do more to curb methane.

Methane is the main component of natural gas, so if captured it can be sold as fuel, offsetting much of the cost of capturing methane for oil and gas firms, according to the International Energy Agency.

EU countries aim to agree their position on the methane law on 19 December, before negotiating the final law next year with the European Parliament.

The EU law would not apply to infrastructure abroad that transports gas into Europe. The EU imports more than 80% of the gas it consumes, and most methane emissions associated with that consumption occur abroad.

Hoping to close this gap, Europe's biggest gas market Germany has asked that the EU methane rules be extended to cover foreign infrastructure, another document showed. Germany wants the new rules to "make a decisive contribution to the Global Methane Pledge," a spokesperson for Germany's economy ministry said, Euractiv writes.