

MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
COMMITTEE
80th session
Agenda item 5

MEPC 80/INF.35
28 April 2023
ENGLISH ONLY

Pre-session public release:

AIR POLLUTION PREVENTION

Ongoing work on a future proposal for the designation of an Emission Control Area in the North-East Atlantic Ocean, pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI

Submitted by Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom and the European Commission

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document provides information on the ongoing work regarding the possible designation of a North-East Atlantic Ocean Emission Control Area under MARPOL Annex VI.

Strategic direction, if applicable: 4

Output: 4.1

Action to be taken: Paragraph 9

Related documents: MEPC 78/11 and MEPC 79/3/6

1 As established in MARPOL Annex VI, an Emission Control Area (ECA) designation by the relevant littoral states is intended to prevent and reduce the adverse impacts on human health and the environment in sea areas in which there is a demonstrated need to prevent, reduce and control emissions of Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x), Sulphur Oxides (SO_x) and/or Particulate Matter (PM).

2 At MEPC 79, the Committee adopted amendments to MARPOL Annex VI concerning the designation of a Mediterranean Sea Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter (SO_x ECA), which will come into effect in 2025.

3. Following the mentioned recent amendments and based on the successful implementation of existing Emission Control Area (ECA) in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea¹, the maritime Administrations from North-East Atlantic Ocean littoral States started preliminary discussions on the potential feasibility of designating an ECA in their waters at the end of 2022. Under the coordination of Portugal, the initiative received support from the following countries

¹ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on implementation and compliance with the sulphur standards for marine fuels set out in Directive (EU) 2016/802 relating to a reduction in the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels, COM(2018) 188 final.

and organisations sharing an interest in protecting the North-East Atlantic Ocean through an ECA: Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, United Kingdom and the European Commission.

4 A potential future ECA in the North-East Atlantic Ocean, for SO_x and PM emissions (on the basis of regulation 14 of MARPOL Annex VI) and NO_x emissions (on the basis of regulation 13) linking the existing ECAs in the Baltic Sea, North Sea and English Channel with the recently adopted Mediterranean Sea SO_x ECA, would constitute a fundamental step towards tackling air pollution from international shipping. Importantly, in view of upcoming designation of additional ECAs in the area by Norway, it would also ensure consistent and uniform regulation across sea areas with high density traffic with a geographical scope covering parts of the North-East Atlantic Ocean.

5 Further discussions have been held to coordinate technical work, launch studies and streamline efforts in this process in view of developing the necessary technical, scientific and the economic case to inform decisions by the littoral states in due course.

6 In support of this process, some analytical work will have to be undertaken to assess costs and benefits linked to the initiative. The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) volunteered to carry out a technical and feasibility study that will take into account, inter alia, the analytic requirements and criteria set out in Appendix III of MARPOL Annex VI. Socio-economic impacts on States will also need to be assessed. The co-sponsors will take into account knowledge already gathered in studies^{2,3,4} previously conducted by relevant research organisations on the cost effectiveness regarding the designation of a Mediterranean ECA or of ECAs in all EU waters.

7 The co-sponsors will also build upon the successful existing experience in implementing the SO_x ECA limits in the North Sea and Baltic Sea, which lead to significant reduction of SO_x emissions while preserving the economic level playing field for the maritime industry.

8 Depending on the outcome of this process, a joint coordinated proposal for the designation of an ECA in the North-East Atlantic Ocean could be submitted by the littoral States, as appropriate, to MEPC 81, scheduled for 2024.

Action requested of the Committee

9 The Committee is invited to note the information provided in this document.

² Rouil, Laurence, Catherine Ratsivalaka, Jean-Marc André, and Nadine Allemand. 2019. "ECAMED: A Technical Feasibility Study for the Implementation of an Emission Control Area (ECA) in the Mediterranean Sea".

³ Corbett, J. J., & Carr, E. W. (2019). REMPEC WG.45/INF9 Technical and feasibility study to examine the possibility of designating the Mediterranean Sea, or parts thereof, as SO_x ECA(s) under MARPOL Annex VI. Valletta, Malta.

⁴ Cofala, Janusz, Markus Amann, Jens Borken-Kleefeld, Adriana Gomez-Sanabria, Chris Heyes, Gregor Kiesewetter, Robert Sander, et al. 2018. "Final Report: The Potential for Cost-Effective Air Emission Reductions from International Shipping through Designation of Further Emission Control Areas in EU Waters with Focus on the Mediterranean Sea".