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P-001895/2025

Answer given by Mr Hoekstra
on behalf of the European Commission
(18.6.2025)

All sectors, including maritime transport, must contribute to the EU climate neutrality goal by 2050 and the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) is key to achieve this objective.

For reasons of administrative practicability, ships below 5 000 gross tonnage (GT) were not included within the scope of the ETS Directive¹ from the start of its extension to maritime transport, but their inclusion in the future could improve the effectiveness of the EU ETS and potentially reduce evasive behaviour with the use of ships below the size threshold². Therefore, the ETS Directive requires the Commission to examine, no later than end of 2026, the feasibility and economic, environmental and social impacts of such a possible inclusion. Other, national measures could be taken, such as opt-ins within the ETS² for buildings, road transport and additional sectors.

The Commission recently adopted a report³ assessing the potential inclusion of smaller ships under the scope of the EU Regulation for the monitoring, reporting and verification of maritime greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It notes that such an extension could have a positive impact on the level playing field since vessels just above or below the size threshold might be competing for similar market segments. In addition, it shows that it could help unlock the implementation of energy efficiency and low carbon solutions. However, the analysis also finds that the balance between administrative costs and additional monitored GHG emissions is less favourable for smaller ships.

The Commission has committed to use 20 million EU allowances⁴ until 2030 to support the decarbonisation of the maritime sector via the Innovation Fund, which can, as well as other instruments⁵, support retrofitting of ships.

¹ Directive 2003/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 October 2003 establishing a scheme for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Community and amending Council Directive 96/61/EC (OJ L 275, 25.10.2003, p. 32).

² The report from the Commission on the monitoring of the implementation of the ETS Directive in relation to maritime transport from 18 March 2025 shows that there is no evidence of an increased use of vessels between 4 000 GT and 5 000 GT in 2024 compared to the previous year- COM(2025) 110 final - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0110>.

³ COM(2025) 109 final - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0109>.

⁴ Worth about EUR 1.5 billion with a price of EUR 75 per EU allowance.

⁵ An inventory of financing products supporting investments in the shipping sector is available in the Ship Financing Portal - https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-modes/maritime/ship-financing-portal_en.