

MEPs' Call for a Truly Green Mobility

All sustainable solutions – including biomethane – are needed to decarbonize transport

The European Union has committed itself to climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest, which shall be achieved by elements like: 90% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector by 2050; just transition leaving no one behind; and adoption of a sector integration approach. Whether the objective of climate neutrality will be achieved in practice and what impact this will have on EU competitiveness and employment strongly depends on the design of a suite of climate policies for the coming years. Transport and future mobility will be a central element of these policies.

The emissions of the EU's transport sector have increased every year since 2014 and the consumption of diesel has increased while the share of renewable energy was only 8.1% in 2018 (EEA, 2020). As the communication from the commission, An EU Strategy for Energy System Integration¹, states *'the deployment of biofuels and biogases has so far been hampered by regulatory uncertainty'*. The same strategy promises *'opportunities for further targeted support to accelerate the development of the market for biofuels and biogases'*. There will be an extensive electrification of both industry and the transport sector in the next few years, but biofuels and especially biomethane are needed and will play an important role in the green transition. We call therefore on the European Commission to ensure coherence and streamline the interlinkages between the different policies and pieces of legislation to ensure the conditions for biogas to contribute to the transition.

The green transition in the transport sector requires a balanced approach combining major technology shifts, such as electric and fuel cell vehicles with prompt introduction of green, affordable technologies that are available today, ready to be scaled up quickly. Biomethane, upgraded biogas, from waste and residues is indeed a highly sustainable energy source for transport profiting from existing technologies (bio-CNG, bio-LNG). The potential of biomethane is according to various assessments² around 370 TWh by 2030 and around 1000-1200 TWh by 2050. In the transport sector, 40% of all gas consumed in the EU could be biomethane by 2030³.

Biomethane offers solutions to multiple environmental long-term challenges: reduction of CO₂ emissions – reaching not only zero-emission but even negative-emission mobility, improved soil fertility, clean water and good air quality. Biomethane turns waste into a resource. Scientific findings show that biomethane contributes, directly or indirectly, to every one of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals⁴. This makes biomethane unique compared to other alternatives in the areas of waste treatment and transport. Many other technologies tend to solve one problem at a time. But biomethane is like a decathlon winner that performs very well in all disciplines. This makes biomethane a particularly cost-effective solution in the transition to a sustainable society, also in the rural areas. Furthermore, being based on proven technologies, biomethane is readily available, affordable, scalable and contributes to maintain a strong automotive industry in the EU.

From all combinations of fuel/energy carriers and powertrains explored, biomethane represents one of the absolute lowest greenhouse gas intensive routes. This is concluded in a recently published

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0299&from=EN>

² Gas for Climate (2020), Eurogas (2020), CERRE (2019), Trinomics (2019)

³ https://www.europeanbiogas.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EBA_NGVA-Europe_TheEuropeanGreenDeal_FastLaneTransport_20200615_spread.pdf

⁴ The Role of Biogas Solutions in the Circular and Bio-based Economy: http://www.biogasost.se/Portals/0/Publikationer/Rapporter/2016_Cirkular_Ekonomi_vetenskaplig_rapport.pdf

Science for Policy report (JEC2 Well-To-Wheels report v5⁵) by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Commission's science and knowledge service.

In addition to all this, biomethane enables a smart sector integration. Biomethane is the link and enabler in and between central policy areas such as sustainable agriculture and socio-economic rural development, waste management, transport, industry and energy production.

In several countries and particularly in the Nordic region, politicians have already identified biomethane as a unique and valuable resource to society. The Nordics are pioneers in promoting the principle of a circular economy in the society; an excellent example is the combination of state, municipal and private investments on biomethane. The present EU CO₂ emission standards for passenger cars with their biased technology approach put in danger the efforts of various Member States to reduce their transport emissions by the most sustainable, locally produced and available fuels, such as biomethane. The climate benefits of biomethane are not recognized in the CO₂ emission standards which has causal effects on other pieces of EU legislation mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

Vehicle manufacturers are consequently discouraged by the current legislation from developing and offering cars and vans running on biomethane. Eventually the regulation is expected to have a similar effect on the heavy-duty segment. In this context, the CO₂ emission standards, as they are designed today, are preventing Europe from exploiting the full potential and advantages of biomethane in transport. This is entirely inconsistent with the scientific findings, which are clear: Biomethane represents one of the absolute lowest greenhouse gas intensive options applicable to decarbonization of road transport⁵.

The current CO₂ emission standards are also contradictory to the revised Renewable Energy Directive setting a favourable framework for the uptake of biomethane in transport. Leveraging on the CO₂ emissions reduction only at tailpipe level has clearly not been sufficient to ensure the shift to carbon neutral mobility. Furthermore, since the entry of full electric and fuel cell vehicles into the market, CO₂ emissions at tailpipe level do no longer function as a measure of vehicle energy efficiency. All in all, this adds to the list of good reasons to question the leveraging on the CO₂ emissions reduction only at tailpipe level.

- **We call the European Commission to remove the above-mentioned barrier hindering Europe from exploiting the potential and advantages of biomethane in transport. The following EU legislation must be revised to recognize the contribution of biomethane and other advanced renewable fuels to CO₂ emission reductions in the transport sector:**
 - **CO₂ emission standards for new vehicles [(EU) 2019/631 and (EU) 2019/1242]**
 - **Taxonomy on Sustainable Finance (delegated regulation on climate change mitigation)**
 - **Clean Vehicles Directive [(EU) 2019/1161]**

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/jec-well-wheels-report-v5>

Signatories

Franc Bogovič, European People's Party / Slovenia

Jakop Dalunde, Greens / Sweden

Heidi Hautala, Greens / Finland

Pär Holmgren, Greens / Sweden

Elsi Katainen, Renew Europe / Finland

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, S&D Group / Finland

Mauri Pekkarinen, Renew Europe / Finland

Massimiliano Salini, European People's Party / Italy

Anne Sander, European People's Party / France

Henna Virkkunen, European People's Party / Finland

Emma Wiesner, Renew Europe / Sweden