



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE METHANE ABATEMENT PARTNERSHIP ROADMAP

INTRODUCTION

Tackling methane emissions in the energy sector is one of the fastest and most effective ways to slow warming in the near term.

Since its launch in 2021, and currently at 159 country participants, the Global Methane Pledge (GMP) has played a central role in elevating this issue on the international stage, building political momentum and committing countries to collectively reduce methane emissions across all sectors by at least 30 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030.

Yet at the halfway point of the GMP timeline, we are not where we need to be. This is because the GMP provides a direction of travel, but not the set of tools to get us there.

While membership continues to grow, most country participants have yet to take concrete action. Energy-related methane emissions have still not reached a definitive peak and the International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates total energy-related methane emissions are about 80 per cent higher than the total reported by countries to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).¹

Concrete initiatives are needed to turn ambition into action and create the conditions for progress as we move towards the phase-out of fossil fuels. To align with the IEA Net Zero Emissions Scenario, global fossil fuel-related methane emissions must fall by 75 per cent by 2030.² Achieving reductions at this scale will require not only action from producers, but also from fossil fuel importers whose purchasing power can drive upstream change.

This is particularly relevant for the European Union (EU). The EU imports 90 per cent of the fossil fuels it consumes and the vast majority of methane emissions linked to these fuels take place before reaching EU borders, in countries that often lack the incentives to address this pollution.³

EU member states thus have a responsibility to address these upstream supply chain emissions and, in this regard, the EU Methane Regulation in the energy sector is a critical first step towards this objective. It includes measures on both domestic and imported fossil fuels, with mitigation measures applying from 2030 onwards – although existing contracts are exempt. Additional action is required to deliver on the collective goal of the GMP.

At the 29th annual UN Climate Change Conference (CoP29) in Azerbaijan in 2024, the European Commission launched the Methane Abatement Partnership (MAP) Roadmap to further accelerate the reduction of methane emissions associated with fossil energy production and consumption.

The initiative is supported by EU member states (notably Germany and Italy), non-EU countries (Canada, Japan and the UK), international institutions, NGOs and development banks. The MAP Roadmap represents the evolution of the You Collect, We Buy initiative announced by the Commission at CoP28 and builds on the “Joint Declaration from Energy Importers and Exporters on Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Fossil Fuels” signed by Canada, EU, Japan, Norway, Singapore and the US at CoP27.^{4,5}

The MAP roadmap aims to catalyse action on energy-related methane, providing a blueprint for cooperation between fossil fuel importing and exporting countries and minimising methane emissions along oil and gas supply chains through the following six key actions:

1. establishing cooperation frameworks between exporting and importing countries
2. improving transparency with measurement-based emissions data
3. supporting the development of methane policies and robust monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) systems
4. working with operators to develop abatement plans for existing assets
5. mobilising investment for mitigation projects
6. tracking implementation to ensure sustained emissions abatement.

Participating in the MAP Roadmap has the potential to give producer countries a strategic advantage. By entering into a partnership, they can gain access to financial and technical assistance to build the systems required under the EU Methane Regulation, particularly on MRV. This enables them to align early with EU import requirements, positioning themselves as reliable suppliers and strengthening their long-term market access. Early movers will be able to demonstrate compliance ahead of competitors, helping secure export opportunities.

For importers, these partnerships are equally valuable. By engaging early with producer countries, importers can build trust and create predictable supply relationships ahead of the EU Methane Regulation's import requirements entering into force. This ensures they already have compliant partners in place when the intensity standard comes into play, reducing the risk of supply disruptions and reinforcing energy security. It also gives importers better visibility over the emissions along their supply chains, improving planning, due diligence and market stability.

While methane mitigation is urgently needed, it cannot substitute for the phase-out of fossil fuels. The MAP Roadmap should not be used to present lower-methane gas as "clean" or "sustainable" or as a justification for prolonging fossil fuel use. Cutting methane is a necessary step to limit near-term climate impacts, but it must go hand-in-hand with a rapid fossil fuel phase-out.

These partnerships should therefore be framed as part of a managed and rapid transition, not a mechanism to delay it.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PARTNERSHIPS

This briefing outlines the key steps towards implementing a MAP, based on a study carried out by Milieu, on behalf of the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA).ⁱ

The study identifies key stakeholders, explores viable implementation models and assesses the financial landscape. The findings are illustrated using case study examples of potential partnerships (Spain-Algeria, Italy-Azerbaijan and Germany-Angola).

STEP 1: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS BASED ON EXISTING TRADE RELATIONSHIPS

The fastest way to bring partnerships to life is to build them on existing energy and diplomatic relations. Long-standing trade links create the political and technical foundation for rapid cooperation. For example, Italy imported 10.6 billion cubic metres (bcm) of fossil gas from Azerbaijan in 2024, while national companies Eni and SOCAR share a history of collaboration.⁶ These existing connections lay the foundations for further cooperation between the two countries.

In addition to bilateral trade ties, several existing initiatives and supportive frameworks between nation states and EU institutions can also lend capacity and facilitate new opportunities for cooperation. The European Commission is partnered with key exporter countries (e.g. Algeria, Azerbaijan and Egypt) through various Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and strategic energy partnerships (e.g. Union for the Mediterranean) that can be used as a foundation to identify and implement MAPs.

ⁱ Milieu (2025). Study on the implementation of methane abatement partnerships. Available at <https://eia-international.org/wp-content/uploads/EIA-Study-on-the-implementation-of-methane-abatement-partnerships-Nov-2025-FINAL.pdf>



Because EU member states are currently engaged in energy deals with 40 partner countries,⁷ coordination is essential to avoid fragmented or duplicate initiatives. The MAP Roadmap is an initiative of the European Commission, meaning an EU-level strategic approach should be deployed to leverage the political and technical capacity of the EU institutions and provide legitimacy to partnerships.

STEP 2: ESTABLISH A BILATERAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE IMPORTING AND PRODUCER COUNTRIES

The study carried out by Milieu found that bilateral agreements (BAs) between EU member states and fossil fuel producing countries are the preferred approach to implementing MAPs.

The flexibility and speed of implementation make BAs the most suitable model, compared to multi-stakeholder approaches (e.g. voluntary partnership agreements, multi-partner agreements) that are associated with higher administrative burdens and longer lead-in times.

The core objective of MAPs is to deliver accelerated methane emissions reductions and align producer countries with the import requirements outlined in the EU Methane Regulation. With MRV requirements entering into force in 2027 and the import standard in 2030, speed of partnership implementation is of crucial importance if the partnerships are to catalyse emissions reductions.

BAs offer a structured tool for two actors to align shared priorities, establishing a formal, contract-based framework. These agreements, usually preceded by an MoU, allow the contractual partners to jointly define objectives, create legally binding commitments and clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party.⁸ They are designed to allocate risk, secure financing for infrastructure and guarantee supply stability.

STEP 3: DEFINE KEY ELEMENTS OF BA

THE BA SHOULD:

- set clear and mutually agreed targets for methane reduction, tailored to the specific circumstances and capabilities of the producer country. This would include establishing quantified methane reduction goals in the energy sector and ensuring alignment with broader international climate commitments
- define the mitigation measures to be deployed, such as technology standards, leak detection and repair programmes and limits to venting and flaring
- include joint implementation roadmaps with measurable milestones and deadlines.

The BA should also outline support for regulatory reforms and fiscal incentives. Fossil fuel producing countries often have laws and regulations that seek to reduce methane emissions resulting from production – e.g. Algerian Law No. 19-13 mandates that routine flaring during production and midstream activities must not exceed one per cent of produced or transported volumes.⁹ The problem lies with enforcement. The BA should identify and detail measures that are needed to achieve regulatory reform, including strengthening public institutions within producer countries and leveraging the capacity of partners to support policy implementation and enforcement.

A further commitment by the importing country to purchase fossil gas of low methane intensity would serve to strengthen the agreement. Such a purchase obligation or preference could serve as a powerful incentive for methane abatement by creating a guaranteed market for verified low-methane intensity gas and signalling long-term demand. The BA could require the producing country to meet specific methane intensity thresholds across its gas value chain or prescriptive mitigation measures could be applied at company or asset level, with a commitment from the importing country to purchase the fuels produced, once the methane abatement measures have been applied. To compensate for the potential additional costs of meeting these standards, the importing country could offer a price premium or tie the gas purchase to complementary financial or technical support under the partnership.

STEP 4: DEFINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE PARTNERSHIP

Effective governance is essential to coordinate and sustain cooperation. The agreement should therefore establish joint coordination bodies, such as steering committees or technical working groups, to oversee implementation, monitor progress and ensure alignment with agreed objectives.

The members of these coordination bodies could include senior civil servants working in energy and trade ministries from the two partner countries and the European Commission, technical experts from national fossil-fuel companies and representatives from international institutions participating in the partnership.



The agreement should regulate the roles and responsibilities of the different parties:

- the EU member state should be responsible for setting the strategic direction, providing policy expertise and ensuring alignment with EU and international frameworks for methane reduction. Technical support could be provided through peer-to-peer exchanges between government institutions and bilateral agencies
- the producer country should be the primary beneficiary of the BA, responsible for domestic implementation and enforcement through its national policies and legislative measures
- industry actors, particularly national fossil fuel companies, should be expected to invest in mitigation technologies, comply with the BA's regulatory requirements and report emissions data. Implementation of methane abatement projects should be carried out by national and private fossil fuel companies. EU companies with a presence in the producer country (e.g. Eni in Azerbaijan, Repsol in Algeria) should provide data, training and technology, collaborating on joint venture projects as a non-operating partner
- given the provision of financial support, emissions reductions must be sustained, with monitoring and verification carried out by third party actors.

To uphold credibility and ensure enforcement, the BA should incorporate a clear dispute resolution framework. Drawing on models from long-term energy contracts, such frameworks should ensure that disagreements over monitoring results, compliance failures or interpretation of technical obligations can be resolved efficiently and impartially.

STEP 5: FORMALISE INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER ACTORS WITHIN THE PARTNERSHIP

Producer countries and their national fossil fuel companies often lack the capacity and resources to address their upstream methane emissions. Governments may face constraints in refining and implementing legislation, while companies may lack the data resources, technical expertise or necessary technology to deploy emissions-reduction projects.

International institutions, such as the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) and the International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO), have a key role to play in providing direct support to producer countries in the form of capacity-building, technical assistance and policy implementation.

Multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank, are important actors for providing finance and technical expertise for methane abatement projects. These international institutions have experience and resources that can be leveraged to bring the partnerships to life. Moreover, existing initiatives, such as the Fossil Fuel Regulatory Programme, Methane Alert Response System and Global Flaring and Methane Reduction Partnership, can provide technical expertise, data resources, support for policy implementation and funding to enable producer countries to monitor and mitigate their emissions.

If cooperation can be formalised within a BA, these actors can offer tailored solutions for capacity-building and ensure compliance with new and existing regulatory frameworks. An MoU or consultancy contract can be used to formalise participation by external stakeholders.

Accurate and transparent tracking of progress is critical to the credibility and effectiveness of MAPs. Rather than creating a new MRV system from scratch, the agreement should build on existing frameworks such as the OGMP 2.0, managed by IMEO, and incorporate compliance mechanisms aligned with the EU Methane Regulation. This MRV element will be key to a successful partnership with countries where enforcement of laws to address methane emissions remains severely limited.

STEP 6: MOBILISE FINANCING

The scale of capital deployment required to address methane emissions in producer countries, in particular for new infrastructure, necessitates coordinated action from multiple actors. While oil and gas majors have large amounts of capital at their disposal, national fossil fuel companies often lack the liquidity to address the methane emissions linked to their operations.

Mobilising finance within MAPs involves two distinct steps. The first involves laying the foundations for a successful partnership through capacity-building, institutional strengthening and policy implementation. This includes funding a dedicated methane team within the responsible ministry or agency and establishing MRV systems. Importantly, this phase does not involve investing in fossil fuel infrastructure but supports the development of the required institutional and regulatory capacity within producer countries to reduce emissions.



This programmatic funding would likely come from public sources and serves to empower the producer country's institutions to take ownership over addressing upstream methane emissions. National public spending rules often prohibit investment in fossil fuel activities, but funding from public sources is required to build institutional capacity and ultimately unlock the necessary private financing for methane abatement projects.

The second step involves the mobilisation of private finance for methane abatement projects. MAPs could serve to bring financial institutions together with fossil fuel companies, to accelerate investment in mitigation projects. The World Bank also has a key role to play in facilitating access to project finance for producer countries through the Global Flaring and Methane Reduction Partnership.

Despite the high return on investment offered by energy methane abatement projects, fossil fuel companies are not investing in these technologies and programmes for various institutional and structural reasons. Novel approaches are therefore needed. EU member states can explore market prioritisation mechanisms within a MAP, where fossil fuels produced and certified with verifiably low methane intensity could be prioritised for import contracts and transportation capacity. This could be achieved using regulatory tools or procurement opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The MAP Roadmap provides a framework for technical assistance, financial support and knowledge-sharing, encouraging producer countries to progressively align with the requirements of the EU Methane Regulation, while respecting their national sovereignty and development priorities.

Its cooperative, partnership-based model recognises that methane emissions are a cross-border challenge that cannot be solved by top-down regulation alone. Achieving rapid reductions requires coordinated action across the entire fossil fuel value chain, from production to distribution, with shared commitments, incentives and technical cooperation between governments, industry and civil society. In other words, it requires dialogue and collaboration – a partnership.

Recent CoPs have brought announcements of various pledges and initiatives to reduce methane emissions from energy. These political promises must lead to action.

The case studies (Spain-Algeria, Italy-Azerbaijan and Germany-Angola) illustrate how partnerships could be implemented based on existing export relationships. The success of the proposed partnerships hinges on political will, robust MRV, financing and balancing energy security with climate goals.

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