

## Italy, France Seek Limits on Ship Emissions in Mediterranean

By Janna Brancolini

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- Nations working together to develop an Emissions Control Area proposal to International Maritime Organization
- Ships would need to switch to low-sulfur fuels and reduce nitrogen emissions

Italy and France want to seek a special designation that would limit the amount of sulfur and nitrogen that ships can emit throughout the Mediterranean Sea.

The two countries will draft a proposal to present to other Mediterranean countries at the next meeting of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean in December, asking the International Maritime Organization to grant Emission Control Area status to the area starting in 2023, the Italian Ministry of the Environment said May 6.

If the plan is successful, the Mediterranean would join the Baltic Sea, North Sea, and U.S. Caribbean Sea—plus much of the rest of the North American coast—as the world’s fifth designated Emission Control Area, which sets ship limits for airborne emissions.

Container ships, cruise ships, and ferries would need to switch to low-sulfur fuels and adopt nitrogen oxide treatment techniques while they’re in the designated zone, which could help prevent air pollution and reduce premature deaths.

Italy and France are “working together for increasingly ambitious goals for protecting the environment,” Italian Minister of the Environment Sergio Costa wrote on Twitter during the G7 Environment meeting on May 5.

### Health Effects

“This will really be a game-changing regulation,” said Anna Gerometta, an Italian environmental lawyer and president of the nonprofit Cittadini per l’Aria (Citizens for the Air), which for three years has been advocating for such a designation for the Mediterranean.

Limiting emissions would reduce the amount of fine particulate matter, or particles smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, which can damage the respiratory system, and would prevent about 15,000 premature deaths per year, according to a December study by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, a research organization in Austria.

It would also reduce chronic illnesses, environmental degradation, and developmental problems in children linked to air pollution, Gerometta said.

In January, the French National Institute for Industrial Environment and Risks commissioned a technical feasibility study that found that implementing such a designation for the Mediterranean would cost about 2.7 billion euros (\$3 billion) per year, but that the mitigation strategy would amount to 8.1 billion euros per year in lower health costs.

Mediterranean shipping companies and consortia didn't respond to requests for comment.

France has been advocating for a Mediterranean ECA since 2017, and in March Spain voiced support for the designation as well.

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