

Methane Emissions From Russian Pipelines Up 40% in 2020 – Study

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The European Space Agency linked the methane emissions to “easily and cost-effectively” avoidable practices during routine maintenance. **Vladimir Smirnov / TASS**

Russian gas pipelines emitted more methane, a potent greenhouse gas, in 2020 than the previous year despite a coronavirus-related slump in demand, the European Space Agency has [said](#).

Citing analysis of its satellite images by the data firm Kayrros, the ESA said Thursday that methane emissions increased by 40% despite a 14% drop in Russian gas exports to Europe and a [10% drop](#) in global methane emissions.

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The ESA linked the methane emissions to “easily and cost-effectively” avoidable practices during routine maintenance operations.

“The climate footprint of these operational practices is enormous,” said Kayrros president Antoine Rostand, who equated the emissions to 3 million tons of carbon dioxide.

The Kayrros analysis detected 46 large methane emission events along Russian pipelines carrying natural gas into Europe in 2019–2020. Energy analysts attributed the 40% spike in methane emissions from flaring and venting to a drop in energy prices and lack of maintenance during the pandemic, according to the Climate Home News [outlet](#).

The International Energy Agency, which names Russia and the United States as the world’s top emitters of methane in absolute numbers, said global methane emissions [dropped](#) 10% in 2020 due to reduced output.

The European Union, the world’s largest gas importer, [said](#) last fall it was considering imposing binding methane emissions standards as it aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

Reuters had named Kayrros’ research part of a growing effort to find the [biggest methane leaks](#) through technology.

In addition to leaky pipelines and infrastructure, methane is emitted from unused coal mines and farming.

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