

Wind propulsion now a force to be reckoned with

Wind power should now be considered as an option for regulatory compliance and cost savings says classification society DNV.

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Berge Olympus fitted with wind assisted propulsionCredit: Berge Bulk

At a Glance

- Wind-assisted propulsion systems can give annual fuel savings of 5 - 20% for certain types of ship
- FuelEU maritime offers a reward factor for vessels fitted with wind propulsion systems
- DNV recommends proactive planning for installing wind assisted propulsion

The uptake of wind-assisted propulsion systems (WAPS) is accelerating and, for suitable ships already in operation as well as newbuildings,

In a recent white paper, [DNV](#) notes that wind-assisted propulsion has notched up annual fuel savings of between 5% and 20% for certain ships, according to owners, operators and technology makers. There has been a rapid uptake of WAPS since 2021, with 52 seagoing vessels with wind power now in service and 97 newbuildings with WAPS on order, as of January 2025.

Wind-based technologies will have a significant role to play as emission regulations tighten, according to the classification society. The European Union's Emissions Trading System (ETS) has now been in place for more than a year, requiring shipowners trading in EU and EEA waters to buy and surrender emission allowances for tank-to-wake emissions.

FuelEU Maritime, in place since 1 January, goes further. Not only does it calculate greenhouse gas (GHG) intensity on a more stringent well-to-wake basis, the regulation also offers a reward factor of

1%, 3% or 5% for ships equipped with WAPS. Both the ETS and FuelEU regulations become stricter over time.

Furthermore, DNV points out that the IMO is now developing new GHG regulations of its own, likely to be adopted this year and entering into force around the middle of 2027. The regulations, DNV says, will include a technical element mandating the use of lower GHG intensity marine fuels and will include a [GHG emissions](#) pricing mechanism.

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WAPS installations will support shipowners with compliance through fuel and emission savings, but the new [IMO](#) regulation could also include a reward towards GHG intensity for ships installed with WAPS. The DNV white paper does not model the impact of these regulations because they have not been finalised but WAPS systems are likely to yield further benefits when the IMO's regulations are introduced.

For now, the classification society recommends that owners should adopt proactive planning strategies, a move recognised by its 'WAPS ready' notation. This could include providing structural foundations, ensuring intact stability compliance, and ensuring the safety of navigation after WAPS installation through an unobstructed line of sight. Such a strategy will minimise the need for additional modifications at the time of installation, saving both time and money.

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