

CTS Project: CO₂ transport and storage solutions in the Black Sea

Alexandra-Constanța Dudu¹, Yuliia Demchuk², Ivan Virshylo³, Mariia Kurylo⁴, Roman Berenblyum⁵, Anders Nermoen⁶, Gabriel Iordache⁷, Andrei-Gabriel Dragoș⁸, Constantin-Ștefan Sava⁹, Corina Avram¹⁰, Lia Stelea¹¹, Sorin Anghel¹², Mykhailo Bratakh¹³, Leonid Melnyk¹⁴

^{1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12}National Institute for Research and Development on Marine Geology and Geo-ecology – GeoEcoMar, Bucharest, Romania

²NGO Geothermal Ukraine, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine

^{3, 13, 14}Ukrasvydobuvannya JSC (UGV), Naftogaz Group, Kyiv, Ukraine

⁴Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine

⁵Norwegian Research Center NORCE, Norway

¹Corresponding author

E-mail: ¹alexandra.dudu@geoecomar.ro, ²y.demchuk@geothermalukraine.org,

³ivan.virshylo@ugv.com.ua, ⁴vmirshylo@gmail.com, ⁵robe@norceresearch.no, ⁶aner@norceresearch.no,

⁷gabriel.iordache@geoecomar.ro, ⁸d.andreigabriel@geoecomar.ro, ⁹savac@geoecomar.ro,

¹⁰corina.avram@geoecomar.ro, ¹¹lia.stelea@geoecomar.ro, ¹²soanghel@geoecomar.ro,

¹³mykhailo.bratakh@ugv.com.ua, ¹⁴leonid.melnyk@ugv.com.ua

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Abstract. The CTS project is evaluating the global potential of direct ship injection technology for facilitating permanent CO₂ storage offshore. One of the scenarios analyzed within the project is the Black Sea scenario, exploring potential links and synergies between Romania and Ukraine for implementation of CCUS technology. Romanian scenario will analyze the CCS chain focused on Constanța and Călărași emission clusters, different transport options (including direct ship injection) and offshore storage in deep saline aquifers and hydrocarbon fields from Histria Depression. For Ukraine, the CCS chain includes capture of CO₂ from Odesa and Mykolaiv regions, onshore and offshore transport and storage in depleted gas and condensate fields from the Black Sea.

Keywords: carbon capture and storage, direct ship injection, Black Sea, Ukraine, Romania.

1. Introduction

Traditional solution for offshore storage requires large, costly infrastructure with immense carbon footprint. This hinders the spread of technology especially for smaller emitters and storage operators. The CTS (CO₂ Transport and Storage directly from a ship: flexible and cost-effective solutions for European offshore storage) team will investigate how using ships as transport and injection vessels (based on Nemo Maritime AS technology, see Fig. 1) can unlock CCUS potential and speed up its deployment.

CTS will study the impact of direct ship injection on the configuration of capture clusters and storage facilities by developing CCS scenarios in four different offshore regions in Europe: Norwegian Continental Shelf, Baltics, Black Sea and Atlantic coast of Portugal (Fig. 2). The Black Sea scenario is composed from an interlinked Romanian and Ukrainian scenarios.

2. Romanian scenarios

Romanian scenario derives from the one built for implementation of CCUS in Galați region within STRATEGY CCUS project. Due to the industrial decline of the region, lack of interest for CCS and closing of some emitters, new emitters have been considered for the CTS scenario. From the previous project, only offshore storage potential has been kept.

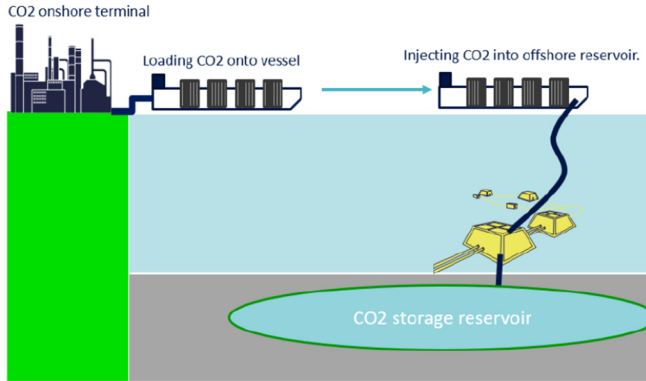


Fig. 1. Concept of direct ship injection as presented by NEMO maritime

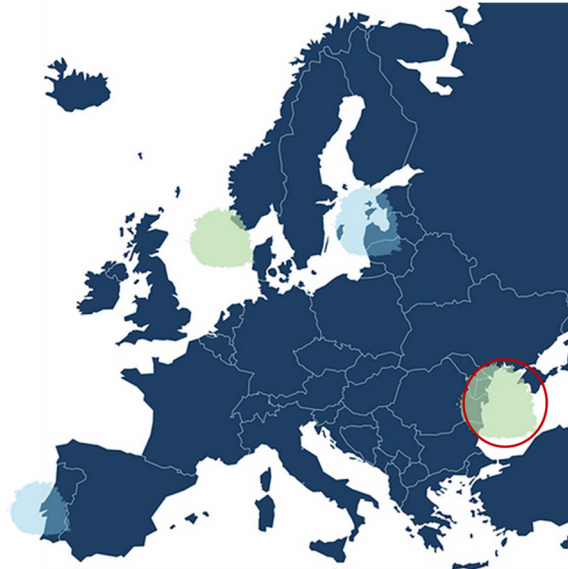


Fig. 2. Map of CTS scenarios. Black Sea scenario location is figured with a red circle

The main Romanian scenario updated for CTS project involves capture of CO₂ from two clusters, Călărași and Constanța and storage in the offshore structures (depleted hydrocarbon fields and deep saline aquifers) in the Black Sea (Fig. 3), Romanian exclusive economic zone. For the CCS value chain, a multi-modal transport approach is considered, involving onshore transport to the ports, fluvial transport on the Danube and the Danube-Black Sea channel (upper branch) and maritime transport to the storage sites using three different options, pipeline, conventional shipping and direct ship injection. To facilitate the CO₂ transport by ships (fluvial or maritime), three hubs are designed to be located in the main ports, Călărași, Medgidia and Midia.

For Călărași cluster, two emitters are considered, a producer of pig iron and steel and a glass manufacturing facility. These two accounted for 0.15 Mt CO₂ eq. in 2023. Constanța cluster has five large emitters, a cement plant from Medgidia, a heat and energy plant in Constanța, an energy plant, a refinery in Midia and a lime factory. These five emitters accounted for 2.03 Mt CO₂ eq in 2023. Emitter data, presented in Table 1, were taken from official and public reporting of National Agency for Environmental Protection [1].

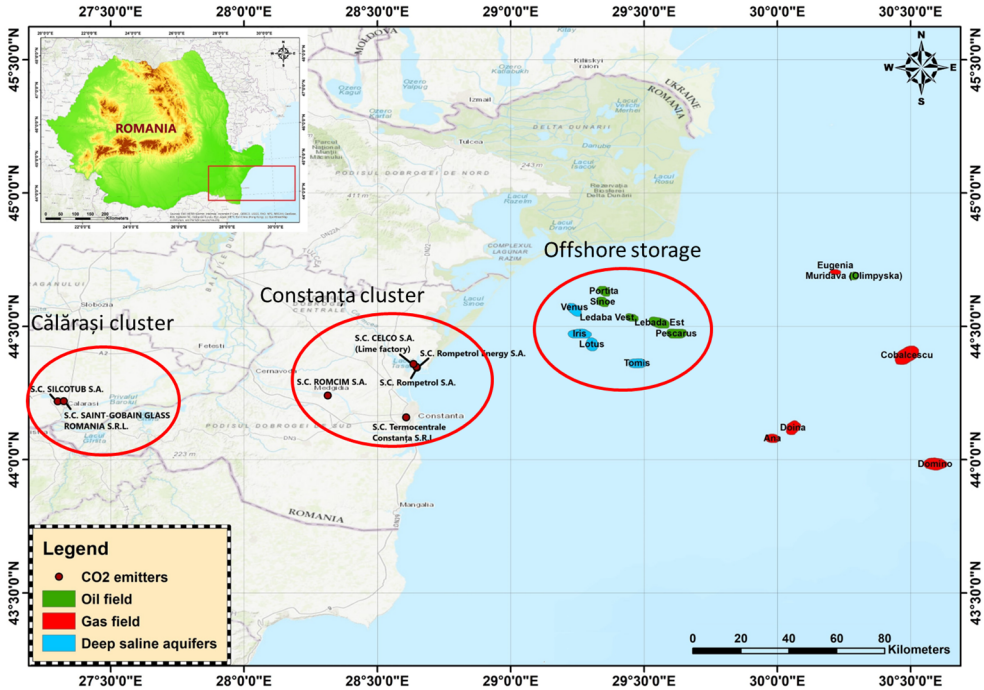


Fig. 3. Map of Romanian CTS main scenario

Table 1. Emitter data for the two clusters considered under CTS Romanian scenario

Emitter name	Industrial sector	Verified emissions 2023 (t CO ₂ eq.)	Cluster
S.C. SILCOTUB S.A. Călărași	Production of pig iron and steel	48803	Călărași
S.C. SAINT – GOBAIN GLASS ROMÂNIA S.R.L.	Glass manufacturing	100946	Călărași
ROMCIM S.A. – Medgidia	Cement production	853512	Constanța
S.C. CELCO S.A.	Lime production	81793	Constanța
S.C. Termocentrale Constanța S.R.L. (former CTE Palas)	Heat and energy production	110847	Constanța
S.C. Rompetrol Rafinare S.A. – Petromidia	Refinery	835562	Constanța
Rompetrol Energy S.A. (former Termoelectric facility Midia S.A.)	Energy production	150821	Constanța

The CO₂ captured from emitters listed in Table 1, with approximately 2.18 Mt of CO₂ annual emissions, can be stored in offshore storage sites from Black Sea, Romanian exclusive economic zone. One option is represented by deep saline aquifers identified and assessed for CO₂ storage in a previous project funded by the Ministry of Research of Romania [2]. These sites, named Venus, Iris, Lotus and Tomis, were selected from the structures found non-productive during the 1980s exploration campaign in the Black Sea. The most suitable storage reservoirs are represented by Eocene carbonates (Venus), quartzitic sandstones with calcareous cement from Albian (Iris) [2], calcareous sandstones with thin intercalations of silty clays within Albian formation (Lotus) [2] and Albian grey sandstones with calcareous cement (Tomis) [2].

The calculation of storage capacity in deep saline aquifers has been made according to the methodology used in EUGeoCapacity project [3]:

$$M_{CO_2} = A \times h \times NG \times \phi \times \rho_{CO_2} \times S_{eff}, \quad (1)$$

where M_{CO_2} is the storage capacity; NG is net to gross ratio; A is the area of the aquifer; h is the average thickness of the reservoir; ϕ is average reservoir porosity; ρ_{CO_2} the density of CO₂ at reservoir conditions and S_{eff} is the storage efficiency factor.

It is important to mention that estimates have been made for several of the parameters used, based on the public data, due to the absence of reliable data and considering that access to data related to offshore structures in Romania is very restricted. The estimation of storage capacity is rather conservative, choosing an average porosity of 20 % for all structures, a NG ratio of 0.5 and a storage efficiency of 20 % (Table 2). The total storage capacity calculated for the deep saline aquifers considered, using Eq. (1), reaches 88 Mt of CO₂ (Table 2), sufficient for storing the CO₂ captured from listed emitters for more than 40 years.

Table 2. Estimation of storage capacity for the deep saline aquifers of Romanian scenario

Name	Area (sq km)	Reservoir formation	Depth to top (m)	Average thickness (m)	NG	Porosity (%)	Density of the CO ₂	Storage capacity (Mt)
Iris	22.1	Albian	2600	100	0.5	20	650	29
Venus	16.55	Eocene	1000	100	0.5	20	550	18
Tomis	17.59	Albian	2700	144	0.5	20	650	33
Lotus	16.05	Albian	1523	135	0.5	20	650	28

The second storage option considered is storage in depleted hydrocarbon fields. The selected fields for the Romanian scenario are the oil fields Lebăda Est, Lebăda Vest and Sinoe, exploited for more than 30 years and discovered during the seismic exploration campaign of the Black Sea in the 1980s [4]. Lebăda Est field, discovered in 1980, has three productive reservoirs in Albian (oil), Upper Cretaceous (oil) and Eocene (gas) [4], out of which Albian seems to be the most suited for storage and it is comprised from silicious and calcareous sandstones, microconglomerates and conglomerates with a porosity of 17 % and permeability of 82 mD [5]. Lebăda Vest field, discovered in 1984, has oil reservoirs on Albian and Upper Cretaceous formations and gas in the Eocene formation [4]. The most suitable reservoir for CO₂ storage is the Albian, comprised of silicious and calcareous sandstones, microconglomerates and conglomerates, due to its good reservoir properties [5]. Sinoe field, discovered in 1988, has the oil reservoir in Eocene and consists of quartzitic sandstones with clay cement and clay intercalations [5]. For these hydrocarbon fields, estimation of storage capacity has been made only for the oil reservoirs and considering only the most suitable reservoirs. Because of poor data availability, a simple formula was used, based on the EUGeoCapacity project [3]:

$$M_{CO_2} = \rho_{CO_2} \times UR_p \times B, \quad (2)$$

where M_{CO_2} is the storage capacity of the hydrocarbon field; ρ_{CO_2} is the CO₂ density at reservoir conditions; UR_p is the proven ultimate recoverable oil or gas, the sum of cumulative production and the proven reserves and B is oil or gas formation volume factor.

Estimated storage capacities are presented in Table 3. Unfortunately, these are only basic estimates since accurate data on ultimate recovery could not be obtained, and publicly available data was used.

Table 3. Estimation of storage capacity in Romanian hydrocarbon fields from the Black Sea

Name of the structure	Area (sq km)	Target reservoir (m)	Average porosity (%)	Reservoir depth (m)	Estimated thickness (m)	Oil or gas formation volume factor	Storage capacity oil (Mt)
Lebăda Est	21.78	Albian	17	2300	30	1.2	25
Lebăda Vest	10.13	Albian	17	2400	25	1.2	25
Sinoe	11.89	Eocen	15	2000	35	1.2	9

The connection between emitters and storage sites is designed in a multi-modal approach

presented in Fig. 4. CO₂ captured from Călărași emitters can be transported by rail up to an intermittent storage hub to be placed in Călărași commercial port. From this point, the captured CO₂ can be transported directly through the Danube and the upper branch of Danube-Black Sea canal into a hub in Midia port. The CO₂ captured from Medgidia cement plant can be shipped directly from Medgidia port hub to Midia hub. The CO₂ from Termocentrale Constanța can be transported also by rail to Midia hub, as well as the CO₂ from the Celco lime factory. The other two emitters, the refinery and the energy plant, are in fact within Midia port.

The suggested value chain scenarios are:

Scenario 1: From Midia hub, CO₂ will be transported through an offshore pipeline to a platform from where the CO₂ will be distributed to the storage sites. The pipeline is designed to follow the corridor of the existing one that connects the Midia refinery and Gloria platform near Lebăda Est field.

Scenario 2: From Midia hub, CO₂ will be loaded on conventional ships and transported to an offshore platform from where the CO₂ will be distributed to storage sites.

Scenario 3: From Midia hub, CO₂ will be loaded on a ship specific for direct ship injection and injected directly into the storage reservoirs offshore.

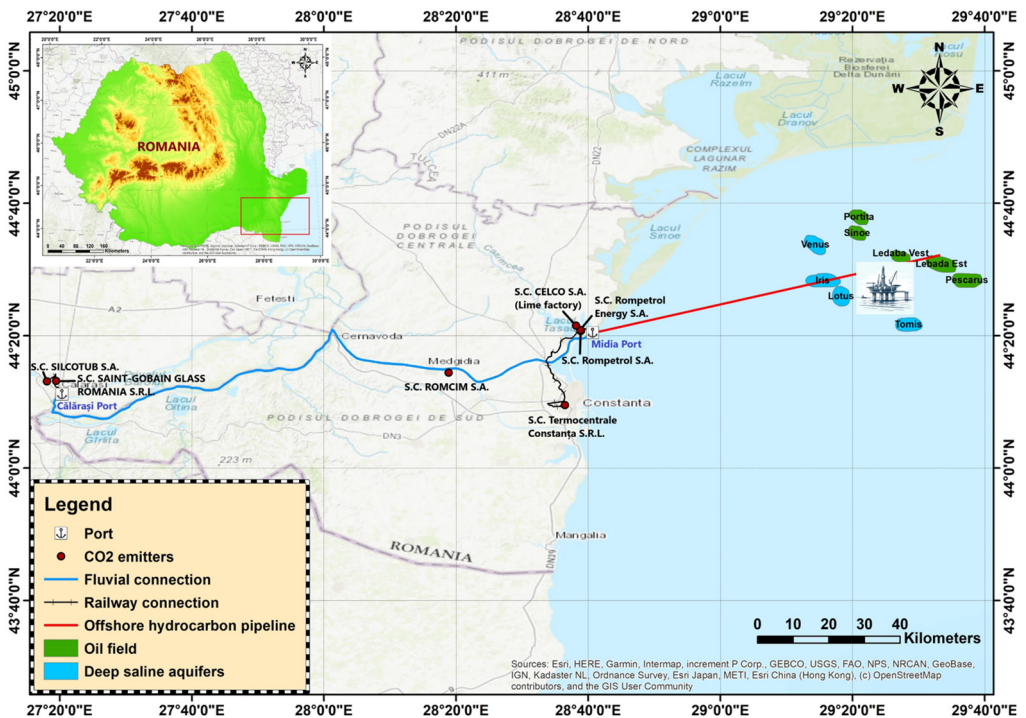


Fig. 4. Design of CO₂ transport for the Romanian scenario

3. Ukrainian CCS scenarios

The Ukrainian base case scenario encompasses both onshore and offshore components. The onshore focus includes the Odesa and Mykolaiv regions with CO₂ emissions and key hubs location, while the offshore segment covers the Ukrainian exclusive economic zone in the Black Sea, where potential CO₂ storage sites have been identified (Fig. 5).

Ukrainian scenario is assessed at regional scale and includes 1.26 Mt CO₂ emissions from two southern regions - Odesa (Table 4) and Mykolaiv (Table 5), which has significant industrial development and good seaport infrastructure, with reported quantity of CO₂ emissions as 0.72 Mt and 0.54 Mt respectively in 2023 [6].

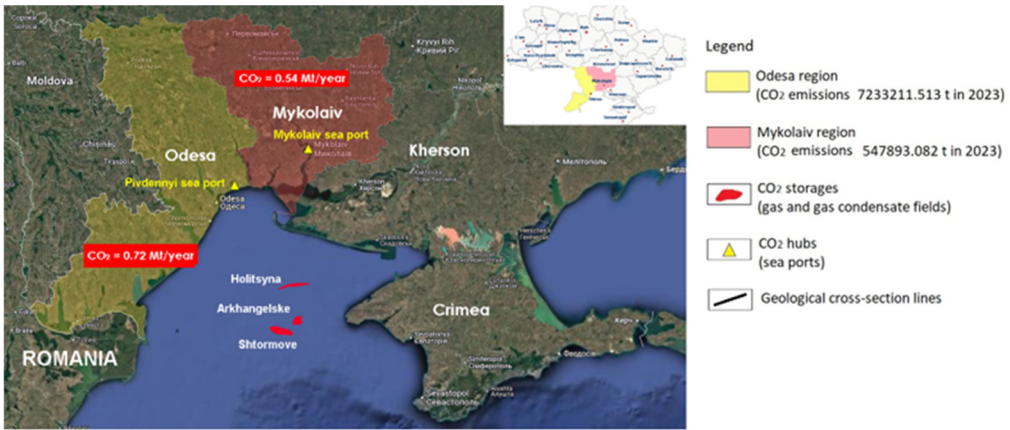


Fig. 5. Map with target regions, potential CO₂ hubs and storage facilities in Ukraine for CTS project

Table 4. Quantity of CO₂ emissions from stationary sources in Odesa region, Mt. [6]

Year	Number of enterprises, which have CO ₂ emissions, units	Quantity of CO ₂ emissions, Mt	Time trend
2021	224	1.41	89.2 % to 2020
2022	224	0.69*	49.3 % to 2021
2023	214	0.72*	104 % to 2022

*Data exclude the territories which are temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation and part of territories where the military actions are taking place as of 2024.

Two other seaside regions (Kherson and Crimea) currently were excluded from analysis due to agricultural focus of economics and significant impact of ongoing war causing doubts in data quality. Western Crimean area can be potential expansion of this study in next research.

Table 5. Quantity of CO₂ emissions from stationary sources in Mykolaiv region, Mt. [6]

Year	Number of enterprises, which have CO ₂ emissions, units	Quantity of CO ₂ emissions, Mt	Time trend
2021	284	2.13	101.7 % to 2020
2022	223	0.52*	24.5 % to 2021
2023	224	0.54*	104.8 % to 2022

*Data exclude the territories which are temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation and part of territories where the military actions are taking place as of 2024.

Pivdennyi and Mykolaiv maritime ports [7], [8] are being considered as strategic CO₂ hubs for Odesa and Mykolaiv regions respectively. Their advanced infrastructure includes deep-water berths, high-capacity cranes, conveyors, specialized liquid cargo facilities and extensive storage. Efficient rail and road connections support seamless logistics, reinforcing their role in CO₂ transport and storage.

CO₂ will be transported to offshore storage sites in the Black Sea, with the geological formations suitable for long-term sequestration. The reservoirs have been identified in depleted gas and gas condensate fields (Holitsyna, Arkhangelske, Shtormove) confined to Karkinite-North Crimean depression. Gas and gas condensate reservoirs, which are considered as potential CO₂ storages, primarily referred to Oligocene-Lower Miocene (Maykop series) and Lower Paleocene formations, consist of clay-rich, carbonate (limestones, marls) and terrigenous (sandstones) sediments with porosity ranges from 20 to 30 % at depth from 900 m and up to 2500 m [9]. For these hydrocarbon fields, estimation of storage capacity has been made considering only the most suitable reservoirs. The total preliminary theoretical CO₂ storage capacity was estimated at 9.39 Mt using a simple formula from the EUGeoCapacity project (Eq. (2)) (Table 6).

Incomplete subsurface data lead to uncertainty of CO₂ storage capacity. Through techno-

economic analysis the direct CO₂ ship injection into the seabed (NEMO solutions) will be compared with conventional solution of pipelines and ship-based CO₂ transport and offshore platforms for injection (Fig. 6).

Table 6. Estimation of storage capacity in Ukrainian hydrocarbon fields from the Black Sea [10], [11], [12], [13]

Field and reservoir name	Area, (km ²)	Depth (m)	Av. thickness, (m)	Target reservoir	Caprock	MCO ₂ , Mt
Holitsyna (II-XI reservoir)	43.17	2155	80	Lower Paleocene (limestones, marls) and terrigenous (sandstones) sediments	Clays	3.33
Arkhangelske (M-V reservoir)	28.6	915	36	Maykop (clay and sandy siltstones)	Clays	1.95
Shtormove (II-XI reservoir)	20.25	986	85	Lower Paleocene (Microcrystalline fractured limestones)	Clays	4.11
						9.39

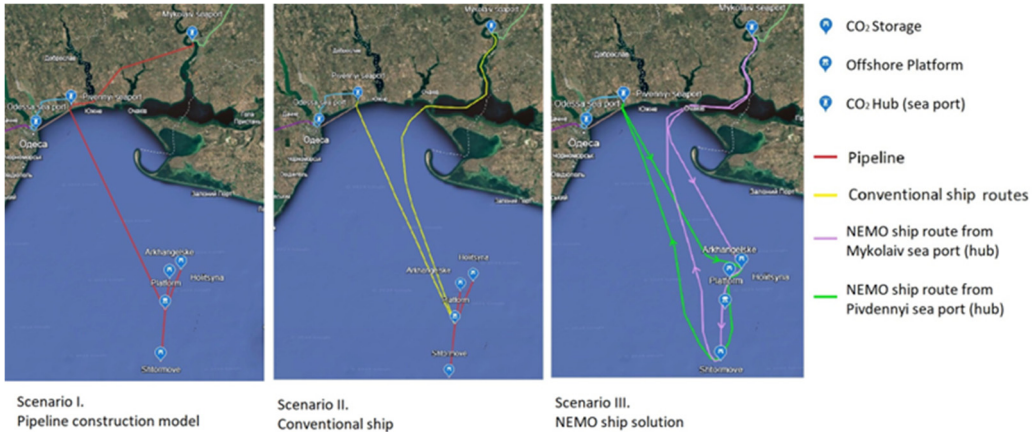


Fig. 6. Ukrainian CTS scenarios I-III

Scenario I: construction of a combined onshore and offshore pipeline system connecting the hubs in the Odesa and Mykolaiv regions to a proposed offshore platform (here and after - Platform) positioned between potential CO₂ storage sites. The pipelines, with proposed an estimated total length 294.6 km, will extend from this Platform to each storage, facilitating the transport and injection of CO₂.

Scenario II: conventional ships approach to transport CO₂ from the hubs to the offshore Platform, with an estimated total routes distance of approximately 670 km. From the Platform CO₂ can be transported through pipelines to each of the potential storage sites.

Scenario III: direct ship CO₂ injection (NEMO ship solution), with an estimated total routes distance of approximately 820 km.

4. Black Sea scenario

The Black Sea integrated scenario merges the Romanian and Ukrainian scenarios. All emissions are envisioned to be stored primarily in Romanian and potentially also in Ukrainian storage sites. This collaborative model aims to enhance operational efficiency, reduce costs and maximize storage capacity by leveraging shared resources and infrastructure. Key aspects of synergy will include geological complementarity, infrastructure optimization and economic feasibility to determine the most cost-effective and scalable solutions for cross-border CO₂

management. The simulations will be used to analyze benefits and potential bottlenecks of cross-border projects, including regulatory aspects. Synergies from cross border cooperation will be estimated in the coming steps and could position the Black Sea region as a strategic hub for CCS in Europe, driving innovation in carbon management and contributing to broader climate goals.

5. Conclusions

In order to check the feasibility of using direct ship injection in the North-Western Black Sea basin several CCS chains were selected for Romania and Ukraine assuming implementation of the technology in comparison with traditional solutions.

For the capture part, only active emitters were taken into consideration and the level of CO₂ to be captured was based on 2023 reported and verified emissions. For Romania, two emission clusters were considered, in Călărași and Constanța areas, totalizing 2.18 Mt of CO₂. In Ukraine, emissions from two southern regions – Odessa and Mykolaiv, strategically located near the Black Sea, are involved in the selected CCS chain, with a quantity of 0.72 Mt/year, and 0.54 Mt/year respectively. It is worth mentioning that this low level of emissions for the Ukrainian regions is due to the reduction of activities related to the ongoing war. Since there is no guarantee that after the war, the industrial activities and the quantity of emissions will implicitly record a significant increase, for the scenarios to be analyzed within CTS project, 2023 reference values will be taken.

The storage for both scenarios is envisaged offshore in the Black Sea. For Romanian scenario, storage is proposed in deep saline aquifers (Venus, Iris, Tomis, Lotus) and oil fields (Lebăda Est, Lebăda Vest, Sinoe). Holitsyna, Arkhangelske and Shtormove gas and gas condensate fields are considered as potential CO₂ storage sites in Ukraine. For both countries and for all the fields, the storage readiness level is low. A conservative estimation on storage capacity has been made for all the fields, based solely on public data, which is extremely limited in Eastern Europe. Due to this fact, several important assumptions had to be made, which could have an impact on the reliability of the estimates. Still, from the estimates it is clear that storage sites can accommodate the captured CO₂ for more than 15 years, at the level of 2023 emissions.

The transport component is designed to be multi-modal and involves key hubs in strategic ports, as Călărași, Medgidia and Midia in Romania and Pivdnynyi and Mykolaiv maritime ports in Ukraine. The approach for the transport involves onshore transport (by rail and river for Romania and pipeline for Ukraine) and offshore transport by pipeline, conventional ship and direct ship injection. All these options will be analyzed and compared to assess the feasibility of the technology studied within the CTS project.

After the techno-economic analysis of the designed value chains, representing a simple storage versus emission volumes comparison, an integrated Black Sea scenario will be made, most probably combining storage options. This integration faces though some key risks, related mostly to geological part, regulatory regimes, economic aspects and nonetheless the unfavorable geopolitical framework created by the war. Still, within CTS project, representing an early stage development project, risks are only mapped rather than fully assessed and mitigation actions should be discussed with relevant stakeholders at regional level. Geological risks are in fact associated with poor data availability and include uncertainties about reservoir integrity, injectivity and storage capacity, requiring thorough site-specific assessments and data acquisition campaigns to be conducted at a later stage in the project development. Economically, high infrastructure costs for pipelines, platforms, and ships pose significant challenges, compounded by inflation, supply chain disruptions, and unforeseen technical issues that inflate project budgets. Economic risks will be assessed by evaluating costs of abated CO₂ at the scenario level and at individual CCS chain components level and comparing them to ETS (Emission Trading System) predictions. Geopolitical instability, particularly in Ukraine, adds uncertainty to timelines, affects investor confidence, and hinders international collaboration.

Nonetheless, the Black Sea region offers significant potential for scaling up CCS initiatives. This potential can be achieved through the development of large-scale infrastructure and by

fostering cross-border cooperation to position Black Sea as a hub for CO₂ storage. CCS initiatives should also be integrated with other decarbonization strategies, such as hydrogen production and renewable energy systems. Establishing robust regulatory frameworks, harmonizing cross-border regulations and creating financial incentives will be crucial in attracting investment and ensuring long-term project viability. Additionally, exploring synergies between CCS and emerging technologies, such as coupled carbon storage and geothermal extraction, can enhance project value and mitigate risks. Effective stakeholder engagement will also play a vital role, as collaboration between governments, industry and international partners is necessary to build trust and secure lasting commitments for the achievement of regional decarbonization goals. With proper risk mitigation, meticulous planning and a forward-looking approach, the Black Sea region has the potential to become a leader in sustainable and scalable CCS solutions, contributing to worldwide decarbonization efforts.

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Data availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Author contributions

Alexandra-Constanța Dudu: writing-original draft preparation, conceptualization. Yuliia Demchuk: writing, review and editing, conceptualization. Ivan Virshylo, Mariia Kurylo, Roman Berenblyum, Anders Nermoen, Gabriel Iordache, Andrei-Gabriel Dragoș, Constantin-Ștefan Sava, Corina Avram, Lia Stelea, Mykhailo Bratakh, Leonid Melnyk: conceptualization.

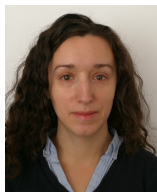
Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Dr. **Alexandra Constanta Dudu**, head of CO₂ geological storage department within GeoEcoMar, is a geophysicist graduated from the Faculty of Geology and Geophysics, University of Bucharest, with a Ph.D. degree in geology and a Master in evaluation of Sedimentary Basins. She is deeply involved in the research of CO₂ geological storage and participated in many national and international projects (starting with 2008). Her main research interests include near surface monitoring of CO₂ geological storage sites, risk assessment and techno-economic analysis of CCS chains.



Yuliia Demchuk is a petroleum geologist and a graduate of the Institute of Geology at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. She also holds a degree in International Economics. She specializes in geological surveying, reservoir assessment and analysis, stakeholder mapping and public awareness campaigns. Her focus areas include shallow and deep geothermal applications, CCS value chains. She has been actively involved in developing business strategies and managing R&D projects funded by EU programs since 2015. She has been a Board Member of the NGO “Geothermal Ukraine” since 2022.



Ivan Virshylo graduated with an M.Sc. in Geology/Geophysics at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine. He has a Ph.D. degree awarded for research in inverse problems of deep geophysical surveys methods in 2004. Has 25 years of teaching career in the same university with focus on geophysics, modeling, data science, as well as industrial projects for petroleum and minerals exploration. Since 2022 joined “green” team of big upstream company Ukgasvydobuvannya as project manager for decarbonization projects – geothermal, CCS/CCUS and hydrogen.



Mariia Kurylo is economic geologist with extensive experience in project management in exploration, mining and oil and gas industry. She is Ph.D. and full D.Sc. in Economic Geology and continues scientific and educational activities at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine. Priority areas of professional activity are the following: sustainability in mining, minerals in green energy transition, ESG Management, LCA and risk assessment. Has 20 years’ experience of industrial projects as a geologist, valuation consultant and technical manager. Since 2022 has involved in the realization of green energy projects, including geothermal and CCS/CCUS.



Roman Berenblyum holds a Ph.D. (2004) from Danish Technical University. Since 2006 has worked in NORCE focusing on carbon dioxide utilisation and storage, geothermal energy, hydrogen, fluid behavior and reservoir simulation related to IOR/EOR. He is currently serving as a member of the CO₂GeoNet Executive Committee.



Anders Nermoen is a senior researcher from NORCE, Norwegian Research Centre AS, with a PhD in geology. Anders does research in CCS, Mechanics, Geophysics, fluid flow, rock-fluid chemical reactions and Experimental Physics.



Gabriel Iordache works in the Environmental Geophysics and Geo-Archaeology department at GeoEcoMar. He is a geographer graduated from the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Agricultural Sciences at “Ovidius” University of Constanta, with a Ph.D. degree in Geography and a master’s degree in sustainable development and eco-tourism. His research focuses on fluvial geomorphology, environmental geophysics and C CO₂ O₂ geological storage. He has participated in many national and international projects.



Andrei-Gabriel Dragoș is a Ph.D. student at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geology and Geophysics and a scientific researcher (CS) at GeoEcoMar since 2019 within Environmental Geophysics and Geo-Archaeology department. He was involved in various projects related to the storage of carbon dioxide, contributing mostly on acquisition and processing of geophysical data.



Dr. Constantin Stefan Sava, a senior geoscientist at GeoEcoMar and a Ph.D. graduate in Geology from the University of Bucharest, is an expert in geophysics. His work includes detailed gravimetric surveys in the Maramureș, Pannonian, and Transylvanian Basins, as well as gravimetric and magnetometric research on the Romanian Black Sea continental shelf. Actively involved in CO₂ geological storage research since 2001, he has contributed to numerous national and international projects, focusing on preliminary, prefeasibility, and feasibility studies. His expertise also extends to CO₂ transport and storage monitoring.



Corina Avram, a researcher employed within the CO₂ geological storage department - GeoEcoMar, is a geologist graduated from the Faculty of Geology and Geophysics - University of Bucharest (2001), with a master's degree in Sedimentary Basin Assessment (2004). She is involved in CO₂ geological storage research and has participated in numerous national and international projects. Her main research interests include the detailed investigation of the geological context for potential CO₂ geological storage sites and the risk assessment in CO₂ geological storage.



Lia Stelea is a member of the CO₂ geological storage department within GeoEcoMar, is a geological engineer graduated from the Faculty of Geology and Geophysics, University of Bucharest. She holds a master’s degree in evaluation of sedimentary basins and mineral resources from the Latter Faculty and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in geology. Her research interests include biological monitoring and seismic risk applied to geological CO₂ storage sites.



Sorin Anghel is a senior geophysicist coordinating the Environmental Geophysics and Geo-Archaeology department within GeoEcoMar. He has been deeply involved in the research for CO₂ geological storage since 2005. In 2014, Dr. Anghel obtained a Ph.D. degree in geology from the University of Bucharest. His main research interest includes geophysical monitoring of CO₂ geological storage sites and investigation of natural CO₂ reservoirs.



Mykhailo Bratakh is graduated petroleum engineer at Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, Ukraine. His Ph.D. is devoted to pipelines transport and underground storage. He has significant industrial expertise in pipelines design and gas transportation planning and maintenance. Since 2022 he is director of R&D Institute of natural gases (branch of Ukrgasvydobuvannya).



Leonid Melnyk is a petroleum engineer and petroleum geologist (graduated at Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, Ukraine). His career is completely linked to Black Sea exploration (from drilling operator to top manager of Chornomornaftohaz petroleum company, then – Ukrgasvydobuvannya / Naftogaz Group). He is one of leading specialist of teams, connected with last discoveries in Ukrainian offshore in northern-western part of Black Sea shelf.