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PYROCO₂

Demonstrating sustainable
value creation from industrial CO₂
by its thermophilic microbial
conversion into acetone

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THE PROJECT

Achieving climate neutrality by 2050 requires a rapid paradigm shift towards the implementations of new, climate positive solutions that can boost the European market. Emerging new solutions for carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) have great potential to decarbonize production in the chemical industry, while allowing value creation from parts of its own carbon emissions. In this context, the PYROCO₂ project will demonstrate the scalability and economic viability of carbon capture and utilization (CCU) to make climate-positive acetone out of industrial CO₂ and renewable electricity derived hydrogen. Core of the technology is an energy-efficient thermophilic microbial bioprocess that is projected towards a reduction of 17 Mt CO₂eq by 2050. The acetone produced by the PYROCO₂ process will be demonstrated as an ideal platform for the catalytic synthesis of a range of chemicals, synthetic fuels, and recyclable polymer materials from CO₂, generating a portfolio of viable business cases and pre-developed processes for replication and commercialization. The PYROCO₂ demonstrator plant will be able to produce up to 4,000 tonnes acetone annually from up to 10,000 tonnes of industrial CO₂ and green hydrogen. It will be located at the industrial cluster of Herøya Industrial Park in southern Norway, a strategic placement that guarantees access to industrial CO₂ feedstock and green energy at a competitive price and connects several carbon-intensive industries with chemical production through industrial symbiosis. From here, the PYROCO₂ project will represent a key driver for the emergence of CCU Hubs across Europe. Besides the large-scale demonstration and full financial, regulatory, and environmental assessment of the PYROCO₂ technology, the project will explore the sphere of public acceptance and market exploitation to further encourage the emergence of the CCU market.

OBJECTIVES

The PYROCO₂ project will demonstrate the scalability and economic viability of carbon capture and utilization (CCU) to make climate-positive acetone, a platform chemical for many other chemicals, fuel additives, and materials. This will be realized by achieving the following specific objectives:

- To design and build a demonstrator-scale chemical production plant based on industrial symbiosis that clearly shows new options for European carbon-intensive industries to create value from CO₂ while reducing emissions.
- To demonstrate large-scale industrial feasibility of thermophilic microbial gas fermentation to produce up to 4,000 t/a acetone from CO₂ and renewable electricity as a platform for its further chemo-catalytic upgrading into a range of other commodity chemicals and materials.
- To establish and promote the new chemical production platform as a more sustainable and economically viable alternative to existing fossil-feedstock based production of acetone and derivable products.
- To create synergies with a wide spectrum of existing and future projects and initiatives of relevance for the Green Transition in Europe, including existing efforts for the emergence of CCUS hubs, related CCUS solutions, renewable energy, and hydrogen.
- To become a key driver for the emergence of CCU Hubs across Europe so that the European chemical industry can lead the ongoing low-carbon and circular economy transitions and ensure that investment and policy needs are met to jointly build a greener and prosperous future in Europe.

IMPACT

The key outcomes of the PYROCO₂ project and the impacts beyond the end of the project include:

- Establishment of an industrial scale demonstrator operational by the end of 2026 based on industrial symbiosis that will interconnect multiple sectors, such as medical and technical gas, fertilizer, cement, metallurgy, hydrogen, chemicals, polymers/materials sectors, and synthetic fuels.
- Providing significant reduction of industrial CO₂ emissions through a highly efficient acetone production process, which is expected to reduce CO₂eq emissions by about the 50% compared to conventional acetone production.
- Contribution to accelerate the transition of the EU chemical industry towards climate neutrality by providing an innovative, affordable, and clean process for producing platform chemicals, as well as a portfolio of commodity products.
- Demonstration of the industrial feasibility and cost effectiveness of the production of acetone via the PYROCO₂ process that will pave the way for the economically sound replication and further upscaling of the PYROCO₂ process elsewhere in Europe.
- Contribution to the strategy adopted by EU for mitigating the excess of air pollution and therefore preserving the health of EU citizens.



LATEST PROGRESS BY SEPTEMBER 2024

The PYROCO₂ project has made significant strides towards its objectives. Pilot-scale process installations for upscaling purposes has been successfully finalized and commissioned in the Stavanger area, marking a key milestone in the project's development. In parallel, tenders for demonstrator-scale equipment for the main project demonstrator have been published, aligning with the site preparations at Herøya Industry Park.

In addition, significant progress has been made in developing efficient catalytic modules (including two pilot-scale installations) for diversifying the product spectrum based on CO₂-derived acetone. The project has recently been granted a six-month extension, allowing for completion and comprehensive utilisation of the demonstration facility. Throughout 2024, the PYROCO₂ project has been presented at numerous events (14 from January 2024), including the project's first exploitation workshop, enhancing its visibility and stakeholder engagement across Europe.

