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Decreasing trends of ammonia emissions over Europe seen from remote sensing and inverse modelling

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Abstract

Ammonia (NH3), a significant precursor of particulate matter, is the most important alkaline gas in the atmosphere and directly affects biodiversity, ecosystems, soil acidification. It also indirectly affects climate and human health. In addition, its concentrations are constantly rising because of the increasing feeding needs of the global population accompanied by a larger use of fertilizers and animal farming. The combination of its increasing atmospheric levels with its environmental and human impact has led many countries to adopt abatement strategies in order to conform with respective regulations. While the significance of ammonia is pronounced, its emissions are often associated with large uncertainties, while its atmospheric abundance is difficult to measure. However, during the last decade, several satellite products have been developed that measure ammonia very effectively, with low uncertainty, and most importantly, with a global coverage. Here, we use satellite observations of column ammonia in combination with an inversion algorithm to derive ammonia emissions with a high resolution over Europe for the period 2013–2020.

Ammonia emissions peak in Northern Europe due to agricultural application and livestock management and the local maxima are found over Western Europe (industrial activity) and over Spain (pig farming). Our calculations show that these emissions have decreased by -26% since 2013 (from 5431 Gg in 2013 to 3994 Gg in 2020) showing that the abatement strategies adopted by the European Union have been very efficient. The slight increase (+4.4%) reported in 2015 is also reproduced here and is attributed to some European countries exceeding annual emission targets. Ammonia emissions are low in winter (286 Gg) and peak in summer (563 Gg) and are dominated by the temperature dependent volatilization of ammonia from the soil. The largest emission decreases were observed in Central and Eastern Europe (-38%) and in Western Europe (-37%), while smaller decreases were recorded in Northern (-17%) and Southern Europe (-7.6%). Our results are associated with relatively low uncertainties reaching a maximum of 42%; when complemented against independent ground-based observations, modelled concentrations using the posterior emissions showed improved statistics, also following the observed seasonal trends. The posterior emissions presented here also agree well with respective estimates reported in the literature and inferred from different methodologies. These results indicate that the posterior emissions of ammonia calculated with satellite measurements and combined with our adapted inverse modelling framework constitute a robust basis for European NH3 estimates and show the *de facto* evolution of ammonia emissions since 2013.

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1 Introduction

Ammonia (NH_3), the only alkaline gas in the atmosphere, constitutes one of the most reactive nitrogen species. It is produced from decomposition of urea, which is a rapid process when catalyzed by enzymes (Sigurdarson et al., 2018). The main sectors contributing to its production are livestock management and wild animals (Behera et al., 2013), biomass burning and domestic coal combustion (Fowler et al., 2004; Sutton et al., 2008), volcanic eruptions (Sutton et al., 2008), and agriculture (Erisman et al., 2007). Emissions from agricultural activity and livestock management represent over 80% of the total emissions (Crippa et al., 2020), while their regional contribution can reach 94% (Van Damme et al., 2018).

Once emitted, it is transported over short distances and deposited to water bodies, soil or vegetation with a typical atmospheric lifetime of a few hours (Evangeliou et al., 2021). It can then lead to eutrophication of water bodies (Stevens et al., 2010), modulate soil pH (Galloway et al., 2003) and «burn» vegetation by pulling water from the leaves (Krupa, 2003). It also reacts with the abundant atmospheric sulfuric and nitric acids (Malm, 2004) forming fine particulate matter (PM2.5) (Tsimpidi et al., 2007). While ammonia has a short atmospheric lifetime, PM2.5 resides significantly longer in the atmosphere, on the order of days to weeks (Seinfeld and Pandis, 2000), and hence is transported over longer distances. Accordingly, secondary PM2.5 can affect the Earth's radiative balance, both directly by scattering incoming radiation (Henze et al., 2012) and indirectly as cloud condensation nuclei (Abbatt et al., 2006). Its environmental effects include visibility problems and contribution to haze formation. Finally, PM2.5 affects human health, as it penetrates the human respiratory system and deposits in the lungs and alveolar regions (Pope and Dockery, 2006; Pope III et al., 2002) contributing to premature mortality (Lelieveld et al., 2015).

To combat secondary pollution, the European Union established a set of measures focusing on ammonia abatement, similar to the ones introduced by China (Giannakis et al., 2019). These measures aim at reducing ammonia emissions by 6% in 2020, relative to 2005. However, the lack of spatiotemporal measurements of ammonia over Europe makes any assessment of the efficiency of these measures difficult, as only bottom-up methods are used to calculate emission. These methods still show a slight increase (0.6% y^{-1}) up to 2018 mostly due to increasing agricultural activities (McDuffie et al., 2020). Such bottom-up approaches rely on uncertain land-use data and emission factors that are not always up to date, thus adding large errors to existing inventories.

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During the last decade, satellite products have also become available to fill the gaps created by spatially disconnected ground-based measurements. Data from satellite sounders such as the Infrared Atmospheric Sounding Interferometer (IASI) (Van Damme et al., 2017), the Atmospheric Infrared Sounder (AIRS) (Warner et al., 2017), the Cross-track Infrared Sounder (CrIS) (Shephard and Cady-Pereira, 2015), the Tropospheric Emission Spectrometer (TES) (Shephard et al., 2015), and Greenhouse Gases Observing Satellite (Someya et al., 2020) are publicly available. Most of them have been validated against ground-based observations or complemented with other remote sensing products (Van Damme et al., 2015, 2018; Dammers et al., 2016, 2017, 2019; Kharol et al., 2018; Shephard et al., 2020; Whitburn et al., 2016).

Accordingly, a few studies on ammonia emission calculations have been recently published relying on 4D-Variational inversion schemes such as (Cao et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2013) or process based models (Beaudor et al., 2023; Vira et al., 2020). More recently, Sitwell et al. (2022) proposed an inversion scheme for a non-linear CrIS observation model using alternation between CrIS ammonia retrievals performed with the logarithm of concentrations and linearized retrievals. In the present study, we use direct comparisons between the CrIS observations and model retrievals using the Least Squares with Adaptive Prior Covariance (LS-APC) algorithm (Tichý et al., 2016), which reduces the number of tuning parameters in the method significantly using variational Bayesian approximation technique. We constrain ammonia emissions over Europe over the 2013–2020 period and validate the results against ground-based observations from EMEP (European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme, https://emep.int/mscw/) (Torseth et al., 2012).

2 Methods

2.1 CrIS observations

To constrain ammonia emissions with inverse modelling, satellite measurements were adopted from the Cross-Track Infrared Sounder (CrIS) onboard the NASA Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership (S-NPP) satellite, which provides atmospheric soundings with a spectral resolution of 0.625 cm^{-1} (Shephard et al., 2015). CrIS presents improved vertical sensitivity for ammonia closer to the surface due to the low spectral noise in the ammonia spectral region (Zavyalov et al., 2013) and the early afternoon overpass that typically coincides with high thermal contrast, which is optimal for thermal infrared sensitivity. The CrIS Fast Physical Retrieval (CFPR) (Shephard and Cady-Pereira, 2015) retrieves ammonia profiles at 14 levels using a physics-based optimal estimation retrieval, which also provides the vertical

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sensitivity (averaging kernels) and an estimate of the retrieval errors (error covariance matrices) for each measurement. As peak sensitivity typically occurs in the boundary layer between 900 and 700 hPa (~ 1 to 3 km) (Shephard et al., 2020) and the surface and total column concentrations are both highly correlated with these boundary layer retrieved levels. The total column random measurement error is estimated in the 10–15% range, with total random errors estimates of ~30% (Shephard et al., 2020). The individual profile retrieval levels show an estimated random measurement error of 10–30 %, with total random errors estimates increasing to 60 to 100% due to the limited vertical resolution. These vertical sensitivity and error output parameters are also useful for using CrIS observations in applications (e.g. data fusion, data assimilation; model-based emission inversions; (Cao et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019)), as a satellite observational operator can be generated in a robust manner. The detection limit of CrIS measurements has been calculated down to 0.3–0.5 ppbv (Shephard et al., 2020). CrIS ammonia has been evaluated against other observations over North America with the Ammonia Monitoring Network (AMoN) (Kharol et al., 2018) and against ground-based Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) spectroscopic observations (Dammers et al., 2017) showing small bias and high correlations.

Daily CrIS ammonia (version 1.6.3) was interpolated onto a 0.5°×0.5° grid covering all of Europe (10°W–50°E, 25°N–75°N) for the period 2013–2020. Interpolation was chosen due to the large number of observations (around 10,000 per day per vertical level consisting of 2920 retrievals), which made the calculation of source-receptor matrices (SRMs) computationally inefficient. Through interpolation we limited the number of observation (and thus the number of SRMs to be calculated) to 12000 per day for 6 vertical levels. Sitwell et al. (2022) showed that the averaging kernels of CrIS ammonia are significant only for the lowest six levels (the upper eight have no influence onto the satellite observations) and therefore we considered only these six vertical levels (~1018-619 hPa).

2.2 A priori emissions of ammonia

We used as a priori emissions for ammonia in the inversion algorithm the ones calculated (i) from the most recent version of ECLIPSEv6 (Evaluating the CLimate and Air Quality ImPacts of Short-livEd Pollutants) (Klimont, 2022; Klimont et al., 2017) combined with biomass burning emissions from GFEDv4 (Global Fire Emission Dataset) (Giglio et al., 2013) hereafter "EC6G4", (ii) a more traditional dataset from ECLIPSEv5, GFED4 and GEIA (Global Emissions InitiAtive), hereafter "EGG" (Bouwman et al., 1997; Giglio et al., 2013; Klimont et al., 2017), (iii) emissions calculated from IASI (Infrared Atmospheric Sounding Interferometer)

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and a 1-dimensional box-model and a modelled lifetime (Evangeliou et al., 2021), denoted as "NE" and (iv) from the high resolution dataset of Van Damme et al. (2018) after applying a simple 1-dimensional box-model (Evangeliou et al., 2021), hereafter denoted as "VD". Given the large uncertainty in ammonia emissions illustrated in Figure 1, we calculated the average of these four priors (hereafter "avgEENV") to establish the a priori emissions used in this study.

2.3 Lagrangian particle dispersion model for the calculation of source-receptor matrices (SRMs) of ammonia

SRMs were calculated for each 0.5°×0.5° grid-cell over Europe (10°W–50°E, 25°N–75°N) using the Lagrangian particle dispersion model FLEXPART version 10.4 (Pisso et al., 2019) adapted to simulate ammonia. The adaptation of the code includes treatment for the loss processes of ammonia adopted from the Eulerian model LMDZ-OR-INCA (horizontal resolution of 2.5°×1.3° and 39 hybrid vertical levels) that includes all atmospheric processes and a state-of-the-art chemical scheme (Hauglustaine et al., 2004). The model accounts for large-scale advection of tracers (Hourdin and Armengaud, 1999), deep convection (Emanuel, 1991), while turbulent mixing in the planetary boundary layer (PBL) is based on a local second-order closure formalism. The model simulates atmospheric transport of natural and anthropogenic aerosols and accounts for emissions, transport (resolved and sub-grid scale), and dry and wet deposition. LMDZ-OR-INCA includes a simple chemical scheme for the ammonia cycle and nitrate particle formation, as well as a state-of-the-art $CH_4/NO_x/CO/NMHC/O_3$ tropospheric photochemistry (Hauglustaine et al., 2014). To calculate chemical loss of ammonia to PM2.5, after a month of spin-up, global atmospheric transport of ammonia was simulated for 2013–2020 by nudging the winds of the 6-hourly ERA Interim Reanalysis data (Dee et al., 2011) with a relaxation time of 10 days (Hourdin et al., 2006). Using the EGG inventory, we calculated the e-folding lifetime of ammonia in the model, which was adopted in FLEXPART. We refer the reader to (Tichý et al., 2022) for a detailed description of the formalism. Atmospheric linearities of the system and a full validation against ground-based observation are also presented in the same paper.

FLEXPART releases computational particles that are tracked backward in time using ERA5 (Hersbach et al., 2020) assimilated meteorological analyses from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) with 137 vertical layers, a horizontal resolution of 0.5°×0.5° and a temporal hourly one. FLEXPART simulates turbulence (Cassiani et al., 2014), unresolved mesoscale motions (Stohl et al., 2005) and includes a deep convection scheme (Forster et al., 2007). SRMs were calculated for 7 days backward in time, at temporal

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intervals that matched satellite measurements and at spatial resolution of 0.25°×0.25°. This 7-day backward tracking is sufficiently long to include almost all ammonia sources that contribute to surface concentrations at the receptors given a typical atmospheric lifetime of about half a day (Van Damme et al., 2018; Evangeliou et al., 2021).

2.4 Inverse modeling algorithm

The inversion method used in the present study relies on optimization of the distance between the CrIS satellite vertical profile observations, denoted as v^{sat}, and retrieved vertical profile, v^{ret}. The CrIS satellite retrieved observations are in situ profiles with an instrument operator applied in logarithm space (Rodgers, 2000) as follows:

$$\ln(v^{ret}) = \ln(v^{a}) + A(\ln(v^{true}) - \ln(v^{a})) \qquad (1)$$

where v^{ret} is the retrieved profile concentration vector, v^{a} is a priori profile concentration vector used in the satellite retrievals, v^{true} is the hypothetical true profile concentration vector supplied by the model ($v^{true} = v^{mod}$), and A is the averaging kernel matrix (for each 0.5°×0.5° resolution grid-cell). This is a useful technique for evaluating if the retrieval algorithm is performing as designed, i.e., it is unbiased and the root mean square error (RMSE) is within the expected variability. The v^{mod} term can be written as:

$$v^{mod} = Mx \qquad (2)$$

for each grid-cell of the spatial domain, where M is the grid-cell specific SRM calculated with FLEXPART and x is the unknown grid-cell specific emission vector. The SRM matrix M is calculated on circular surroundings around each grid-cell due to computational effectiveness. We select 4 degrees radius surroundings (approx. 445 kilometers) which is shown to be sufficient for reliable emission estimation and low sensitivity has been observed with this choice. Since the vector x is unknown, we replace it by a prior emission x^{a} (see section 2.2) in the initial step that is gradually refined iteratively based on the satellite observations.

The used inversion setup is based on iterative minimization of distance between v^{sat} and v^{ret} updating (iteratively) the emission x such as below:

$$\arg\min_{x^{a} \to x} \left|\left| v^{sat} - v^{ret} \right|\right|_2^2 \qquad (3)$$

for each grid-cell of computational domain. The minimization problem is solved in two steps.

First, we construct the linear inverse problem where v^{ret} from the given surroundings, denoted here as S, forms the block-diagonal matrix v_S^{ret} while v^{sat} from the given surroundings form an associated observation vector v_S^{sat}. This forms the linear inverse problem:

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$$v^{sat} = v_S^{ret} q_S \qquad (4)$$

where the vector q_S is a vector with coefficients denoting how x^a needs to be refined to obtain emission estimate vector x. We solve Eq. 4 using the least squares with adaptive prior covariance (LS-APC) algorithm (Tichý et al., 2016). The algorithm is based on variational Bayesian methodology assuming non-negative solution and favoring solution without abrupt changes and it minimizes the use of manual tuning (Tichý et al., 2020).

Second, the grid-cell specific coefficient vector q_S is propagated in Eq. 1 to refine a prior emission x^a and obtain estimated unknown emissions x. To maintain stability of the method, we bound the ratio between prior and posterior emission elements to 0.01 and 100, respectively. This choice, motivated by Cao et al. (2020), omits unrealistically small or high emissions, however, the bounds are large enough to allow for new sources, as well as for attenuation of old sources. For this reason, the choice of prior emission is of great importance in the method.

Note that CrIS data for some spatiotemporal elements are missing in the dataset. In these cases, we interpolated the missing data following the method proposed by D'Errico (2023), which solves a direct linear system of equations for NaN elements, while the extrapolation behavior of the method is linear. Another strategy recently adopted in the literature has been to tackle the missing data using total variation methodology (see details in Fang et al., 2023); however, the method has been limited so far to its use on point-source release, hence we did not use it in this work.

3 Results

3.1 Emissions of ammonia in Europe (2013–2020)

We analyze the CrIS ammonia satellite observations for Europe (10°W–50°E, 25°N–75°N) over the 2013-2020 period on monthly basis to derive ammonia emissions using the inverse modelling methodology described in Section 2.4. The inversion algorithm is applied to each year of CrIS observations separately with the use of the avgEENV prior emission.

The overall resulting spatial distribution of the posterior emissions of ammonia (denoted as posterior_avgEENV) averaged for the whole period are displayed in Figure 2 (top-left). The highest emissions occur in Northwestern Europe (including Northern Belgium, the Netherlands and northwestern Germany) and to a smaller extent in the Po Valley (Italy), and the Ebro Valley (Spain). Local maxima are also seen over Pulawy (Poland), South Romania and Kutina (Croatia) due to industrial applications (Clarisse et al., 2019; Van Damme et al., 2018). While ammonia emissions were not calculated high in the Po Valley (8 year average), it has been

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reported that in Lombardy, about 90% of the ammonia emissions there have been reported to originate from manure management (Lonati and Cernuschi, 2020). The Ebro Valley is characterized by intensive agricultural activities (Lassaletta et al., 2012; Lecina et al., 2010) and the Aragon and Catalonia regions by large pig farms (Van Damme et al., 2022). Finally, both Belgium and The Netherlands are countries in which intensive livestock activity is documented. It consists mostly of dairy cow, beef cattle, pig and chicken farming (Gilbert et al., 2018; Lesschen et al., 2011; Velthof et al., 2012).

Figure 2 (top-right) shows the annual posterior emissions discretized monthly for the whole period (solid line) compared to prior ammonia emissions (dashed line). Higher emissions that the prior ones were calculated, which is not necessarily attributed to emission increases over Europe, but rather to miscalculation of emissions in the prior bottom-up inventories that were used. A strong seasonal cycle is also observed peaking in the middle of each year (summer) of the study period, but for several of these years, the characteristic bimodal cycle also appears with another peak in spring (Beaudor et al., 2023).

To examine more closely the seasonal variability of ammonia emissions in Europe, we present the monthly posterior emissions of ammonia averaged for the whole study period (2013–2020) at the bottom-left panel of Figure 2 together with the prior ones. The interannual variability over the period between 2013 and 2020, is also apparent in the monthly box and whisker plots of the posterior emissions. In addition, the spatial distribution of monthly ammonia emissions averaged for the eight-year period is given in Supplementary Figure S 1. It appears that ammonia emissions are very low in wintertime (DJF average: 286 Gg) over Europe and increase towards summer (JJA average: 563 Gg), due to temperature dependent volatilization of ammonia (Sutton et al., 2013), with the largest emissions occurring in August (601 Gg). Although a clear peak of fertilization in early spring is missing from the plot, emissions start to increase in early spring to peak in late-summer (Van Damme et al., 2022) corresponding to the start and end of the fertilization periods in Europe (Paulot et al., 2014). Fertilization is tightly regulated in Europe (Ge et al., 2020). It is only allowed from February to mid-September in The Netherlands, while manure application is also only allowed during the same period depending on the type of manure and the type of land (Van Damme et al., 2022). In Belgium, nitrogen fertilizers are only allowed from mid-February to the end of August (Van Damme et al., 2022), so as in Germany (restricted in winter months) (Kuhn, 2017).

Finally, Figure 2 (bottom-right) shows the annual posterior emissions for the whole period with the annual total emissions for each year. We observe a significant decrease in ammonia posterior emissions over Europe during the 2013–2020 period. Emissions were

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estimated as 5431 Gg for 2013 decreasing to 4890 Gg in 2014. A minor increase can be seen in 2015 (5104 Gg), after which a significant decrease of 534 Gg (more than 10%) was estimated, followed by the nearly constant plateau at the levels between 4383 Gg in 2017, 4323 Gg in 2019 and finally to 3994 Gg in 2020. The gradual decrease in ammonia emissions over Europe since 2013 is also plotted spatially in Supplementary Figure S 2. It is evident that the restrictions and measures adopted by the European Union to reduce secondary PM formation were successful, as emissions in the hot-spot regions of Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany and Poland declined drastically over time. However, an increase of +4.4% was observed in 2015. It has been reported that ammonia emissions increased in 2015 and several European Union Member States, as well as the EU as a whole, exceeded their respective ammonia emission ceilings (EEA, 2017). The increase was reported to be +1.8% and was mainly caused by increased emissions in Germany, Spain, France, and the United Kingdom. This was caused by extensive use of inorganic nitrogen fertilizers (including urea application) in Germany, while increased emissions in Spain were driven by an increase in the consumption of synthetic nitrogen fertilizers and in the number of cattle and pigs (EEA, 2017). It should be mentioned that a partial decrease of ammonia in 2020 might be due to the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly due to bias created by the decrease of NO_x and SO_2 that are precursor species of the atmospheric acids, with which ammonia reacts (see Tichý et al., 2022).

3.2 Country by country ammonia emissions

Posterior annual emissions of ammonia for 2013–2020 are plotted for four European regions (Western, Central and Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe) in the left panel of Figure 3, while the estimated seasonal variation of each region is shown on the right panels averaged over the whole eight-year period. Western Europe includes Ireland, Austria, France, Germany, Belgium, Andorra, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Switzerland, and United Kingdom; Central and Eastern Europe include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czechia, Croatia, Hungary, Belarus, Slovakia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Moldova, Slovenia, Ukraine, and Serbia; Northern Europe is defined by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Faroe Islands, Norway, and Sweden; finally, Southern Europe includes Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain.

The most significant decreases in ammonia emissions were estimated to be -38% in Central and Eastern Europe and -37% in Western Europe, respectively. Quantitatively, Central and Eastern Europe emissions were estimated to gradually drop from 2190 Gg in 2013 and to 1495 Gg in 2020 with a small increase in 2015 (2171 Gg) mainly because Germany, France

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and the United Kingdom missed their emission targets (EEA, 2017). Western European emissions of ammonia also declined constantly over time from 2041 Gg in 2013 to 1421 Gg in 2020. Smaller, yet significant, decreases were calculated over Northern Europe from 398 Gg in 2013 to 333 Gg in 2020 (-17%). Finally, Southern Europe exhibited a minor drop between years 2013 and 2014 (from 803 Gg in 2013 to 729 Gg in 2014) followed by a small increase until 2019 (from 729 to 803 Gg), and then decreased again in 2020 to 743 Gg. Overall, Southern European emissions decreased by -7.62%.

The seasonal cycle of ammonia was again characterized by the restrictions applied to the agricultural-related activities by the European Union member states (Figure 3, right panels). As such, emissions in Western, Central and Eastern and Southern Europe were very low in winter and started increasing when fertilization was allowed in early spring, whereas the increasing temperature towards summer increased volatilization and, thus, emissions of ammonia (Van Damme et al., 2022; Ge et al., 2020). Although much less marked than in other European regions due to lower prevailing temperatures and weaker agricultural applications, emissions in Northern Europe show the spring-summer temperature dependence. However, emissions were estimated to be double in winter rather following the cycle of SO2 (Tang et al., 2020). Despite measurements have shown that ammonia might increase in winter at high latitudes (Aas et al., 2020), we conclude that the model likely underperforms here. Supplementary Figure S 3 shows prior emissions in Western, Central and Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe for EC6G4 and NE emission inventories. Both show the aforementioned increase in emissions during winter in Northeastern Europe. Especially the NE emissions dominate the a priori emissions that were used here (avgEENV), because they are the highest, whereas the winter peak in the north is extreme (emissions decline from 35 to 12 Gg). Therefore, there is a very strong dependence of the posterior seasonality of ammonia in Northern Europe due to the strong prior that we use there.

Country specific emissions of posterior ammonia on a monthly basis (eight-year average emissions) are shown for 20 countries in Supplementary Figure S 4. For countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Belgium, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Belarus and Romania two peaks can be clearly seen in late spring and end of summer. As discussed before, these peaks coincide with the two main fertilization periods in Europe (Paulot et al., 2014). However, it is expected that ammonia abundance is high throughout the entire spring–summer period (e.g., Greece, France, Germany, Czechia, Ukraine and Bulgaria) due to agricultural activity and temperature dependent volatilization (Sutton et al., 2013).

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Ammonia emissions in Finland, Sweden and Norway are smaller than in the rest of Europe and show a reverse seasonality.

3.3 Uncertainties in ammonia's posterior emissions

For the calculation of uncertainty of posterior emissions of ammonia, we benefit from the form of posterior, which arises as a Gaussian distribution with calculated mean and standard deviation for each element of our spatiotemporal domain. In accordance with the posterior emissions defined in Section 2.4, we propagate the standard deviation through Eq. 1 to obtain the uncertainty of each spatiotemporal element, here denoted as $u_{\text{elem},t}$. If two variables follow a Gaussian distribution with means μ_1 and μ_2 and standard deviations σ_1 and σ_2, the sum of these variables has the mean $\mu_1 + \mu_2$ and standard deviation $\sqrt{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2}$. Therefore, the total uncertainty for each spatial element over the temporal axis is then a square root of summed uncertainties over the selected time steps $[t_1; t_2]$:

$$U_{\text{elem}} = \sqrt{\sum_{t=t_1}^{t_2} u_{\text{elem},t}} \qquad (5)$$

The calculated posterior uncertainty for our spatial domain and studied period (2013–2020) is shown in Figure 5. Here, we display uncertainty calculated as 2 standard deviations (2 σ), i.e. 95% of the values lay inside the interval with the center in the reported emission surrounded by the reported uncertainty. The same results for each year of the study period are depicted in Supplementary Figure S 5. The absolute uncertainty of posterior ammonia emissions reaches a maximum of 25 ng m^{-2} s^{-1} or about 42% (relative value). In general, the pattern of posterior uncertainty follows the one of the posterior emissions, with the highest values over (i) Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany due to livestock, farming, and agricultural activity; (ii) Poland, South Romania and Croatia due to industrial applications; (iii) Catalonia due to pig farming; (iv) West France due to manure application. Nevertheless, the obtained posterior uncertainty remains low, and this depicts the robustness of the methodology used and the calculated posterior emissions of ammonia.

3.4 Validation of posterior emissions

As shown in Eq. 3 (Section 2.4), the inversion algorithm minimizes the distance between the satellite observations (v^{sat}) and the retrieved ammonia concentrations (v^{ret}). The latter is a function of different satellite parameters (e.g., averaging kernel sensitivities) and modelled ammonia concentrations using a prior dataset (v^{mod} or v^{true}) as seen in Eq. 1. The overall result is always propagated to v^{mod} iteratively, each time updating the prior emissions to obtain

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posterior ammonia. As specified in CrIS guidelines, modelled concentrations (v^{mod}) cannot be directly compared with satellite data (v^{sat}), while comparing v^{sat} with v^{ret} is not a proper validation method, because the comparison is performed for satellite observations that were included in the inversion (dependent observations), and the inversion algorithm has been designed to reduce the v^{sat}-v^{ret} mismatches. This means that the reduction of the posterior retrieved concentration (v^{ret}) mismatches to the observations (v^{sat}) is determined by the weighting that is given to the observations with respect to v^{ret}. A proper validation of the posterior emissions is performed against observations that were not included in the inversion (independent observations).

For these reasons, we compare modelled posterior concentrations of ammonia (v^{mod}) at the surface with ground-based observations over Europe from the EMEP (European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme, https://emep.int/mscw/) network (Torseth et al., 2012). The measurements are open in public and can be retrieved from https://ebas.nilu.no. We used measurements for all years between 2013 and 2020 from an average of 53 stations with 2928 observations for each station covering all Europe (Supplementary Figure S 6). The comparison is plotted for each of the 53 stations separately on a Taylor diagram in Figure 6. For all stations, the Pearson's correlation coefficient increased for the posterior ammonia (coloured circles) increased as compared to the prior one (coloured squares) reaching above 0.6 at several stations, while the normalized root mean square error (nRMSE) and standard deviation were kept below 2 (unitless) and 2 μg m-3, respectively, in almost all stations (except SI0008 in Slovenia).

To further show how posterior emissions of ammonia affect modelled concentrations, we chose six stations (DE0002 in Germany, NO0056 in South Norway, ES0009 in Spain, NL0091 in the Netherlands, HU0002 in Hungary and PL0005 in Poland) from the EMEP network (highlighted in red in Supplementary Figure S 6), and we plot prior and posterior concentrations against ground-based ammonia over time for the whole study period (2013–2020) in Supplementary Figure S 7. Given the long period of plotting, we average observations every week and modelled concentrations every month for a more visible representation of the comparison. To evaluate the comparison, we calculate a number of statistic measures, namely nRMSE, the normalized mean absolute error (nMAE) and the root mean squared logarithmic error (RMSLE) as defined below:

$$nRMSE = \frac{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{1}{n}(m_i - o_i)^2}}{\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n} o_i} \qquad nMAE = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} |m_i - o_i|}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} o_i}$$

$$RMSLE = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n} (\log m_i - \log o_i)^2} \qquad (6)$$

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where n is sample size, m and o the individual sample points for model concentrations and observations of ammonia indexed with i. As one can see in Supplementary Figure S 7, all statistics were improved in all six stations and posterior concentrations were closer to the observations. However, individual peaks were in many cases misrepresented in the model. Whether this is a result of the measurement technique or the fact that local sources cannot be considered for such high spatiotemporal resolution as those in the CTM and FLEXPART (given the short lifetime of atmospheric ammonia) needs further research. The best results were obtained at station ES0009 (Spain), where model captures the seasonal variation of the observations during the whole study period (2013–2020). In all other stations, the seasonality is maintained albeit steep peaks in the observations are lost.

4 Discussion

We compared our posterior estimates with two recently published studies on ammonia emission in Europe (Cao et al., 2022; Luo et al., 2022). Luo et al. (2022) used IASI observations for the period 2008 to 2018 to estimate ammonia emissions in a global domain. Their method was based on updating prior emissions with correction term computed using differences between observed and simulated ammonia columns combined with calculated ammonia lifetimes. The key indicators calculated for the European domain in Luo et al. (2022) are a linear trend for the 2008–2018 period, average annual emissions, and relative trends. Note that we compare our eight-year period with a decade in Luo et al. (2022). The comparison is depicted in Figure 4. Our estimates (Figure 4, left panel) are in good agreement with those calculated by Luo et al. (2022). The linear trend was estimated as -1.27 Tg for the period by Luo et al. (2022), while our estimate is -1.44 Tg. The spatial distribution of the trend is also given in Figure 4 (left panel). The key decrease is observed mainly in France, Germany, and middle Europe, while the increasing trend is observed mostly in Spain, parts of Italy, and Greece. The average annual ammonia emission for the European domain in Luo et al. (2022) was estimated to be 5.05 Tg while our estimate is 4.63 Tg. Our lower estimate (by approximately 8%) may be attributed to use of more recent period considered in our study, but both methods agree that the trend in Europe is negative. The relative decrease estimated by Luo et al. (2022) is -25.1%, while we calculate -31.02%, which is again in very good agreement.

Cao et al. (2022) used CrIS observations for the year 2016 in order to estimate ammonia emissions for 25 European Union members (EU25), namely Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal,

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Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain. The method was tested with uni-directional and bi-directional flux schemes. The uni-directional dry deposition scheme assumes only air to surface exchange of ammonia ignoring changes in environmental conditions, while the bi-directional scheme captures dynamics in measured ammonia fluxes. Total estimated ammonia emissions for the EU25 region by the uni-directional scheme (posterior_uni) and the bi-directional scheme (posterior_bi) were reported as 3534 Gg N y−1 and 2850 Gg N y−1, respectively. The posterior_bi estimate is very close to our estimate for EU25 for the year 2016, which is 2712 Gg N y−1, while the posterior_uni is approximately 30% higher. A uni-directional dry deposition scheme treats surface exchange of ammonia between the atmosphere and biosphere in a one-way manner (from air to surface) and ignores the impacts of changes in environmental conditions (e.g., soil temperature, soil wetness, soil pH, fertilized condition, and vegetation type) on ammonia emissions from fertilized soil and crops (volatilization), which likely lead to high biases in top-down estimates. Ammonia in LMDz-OR-INCA model, that was used to capture ammonia's losses, resembles a partially bi-directional treatment, where emissions and deposition are both possible at the same time without any use of a compensation point; this may explain the 30% difference.

The detailed EU25 emissions for the year 2016 are displayed in Figure 4 (right panel) for posterior_uni (red), posterior_bi (yellow), our post_avgEENV (blue), and priors used by Cao et al. (2022) and in our study (dashed red and blue, respectively). As seen from Figure 4, our posterior estimates (post_avgEENV) have more similar characteristics with posterior_bi, with monthly difference to be less than factor of 2 positive or negative from Cao et al. (2022). Note that the posterior_uni estimates are always a factor of 3 higher than our posterior estimates for ammonia emissions. The main differences can be observed during February-March and October-November periods where our estimates are generally lower than those from Cao et al. (2022).

5 Conclusions

Today, a large debate takes place about ammonia abatement strategies for Europe, but also for Southeastern Asia, in an effort to reduce secondary formation and, thus, mitigate climate crisis (van Vuuren et al., 2015). These strategies include (a) low nitrogen feed by reducing ammonia emissions at many stages of manure management, from excretion in housing, through storage of manure to application on land, also having positive effects on animal health and indoor climate (Montalvo et al., 2015); (b) low emission livestock housing, which focuses on reducing the surface and time manure is exposed to air by adopting rules and

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regulations regarding new livestock houses (Poteko et al., 2019); (c) air purification by adopting technologies to clean exhaust air from livestock buildings (Cao et al., 2023) and others. Here, we examine the impact of such strategies adopted by several European countries on the emissions of ammonia inferred using satellite observations from CrIS and a novel inverse modelling algorithm. We examine and assess the changes on ammonia emissions for the period 2013–2020. The main key messages can be summarized below:

- The highest emissions during the 2013–2020 study period occur in North Europe (Belgium, the Netherlands and northwestern Germany). At a regional scale, peaks are seen in Western Europe (Poland, South Romania and Croatia) due to industrial applications, in Spain (Ebro Valley, Aragon, Catalonia) due to agricultural activities and farming, in Belgium and The Netherlands due to livestock activity (dairy cow, beef cattle, pig and chicken farming).
- Ammonia emissions are low in winter (average: 286 Gg) and peak in summer (average: 563 Gg), due to temperature dependent volatilization of ammonia, while a notable peak attributed to fertilization can be seen in early spring during some years.
- Over the 2013–2020 period, European emissions of ammonia decreased from 5431 Gg in 2013 to 3994 Gg in 2020 or about -26%. Hence, the restrictions adopted by the European Union members were effective in reducing secondary PM formation.
- A slight emission increase of +4.4% in 2015 appears for several European Union Member States (Germany, Spain, France, and the United Kingdom) who exceeded the respective ammonia emission targets. Part of the 2020 ammonia decrease might be attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.
- The largest decreases in ammonia emissions were observed in Central and Eastern Europe (-38%, 2190 Gg in 2013 to 1495 Gg in 2020) and in Western Europe (-37%, 2041 Gg in 2013 to 1421 Gg in 2020). Smaller decreases were calculated in Northern Europe (-17%, 398 Gg in 2013 to 333 Gg in 2020) and, Southern Europe (-7.6%, from 803 Gg in 2013 to to 743 Gg in 2020).
- The maximum calculated absolute uncertainty of posterior emissions was 25 ng m^{-2} s^{-1}, or about 42% (relative value) following the spatial distribution of the posterior emissions.
- Comparison of the concentrations calculated with prior and posterior ammonia emissions against independent (not used in the inversion algorithm) observations showed improved correlation coefficients and low nRMSEs and standard deviations. Looking at timeseries of six randomly selected stations in Europe, we also found that posterior surface

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concentrations of ammonia were in accordance with the ground-based measurement, also following the observed seasonal trends.

- Our results agree very well with those from Luo et al. (2022) (decreasing trend: -1.44 versus -1.27 Tg, annual European emissions: 4.63 versus 5.05 Tg) and those from Cao et al. (2022) following their methodology (their posterior_bi estimate for EU25 and year 2016 was 2850 Gg N y−1, while we calculate 2712 Gg N y−1).
- The relatively low posterior uncertainty and improved statistics in the validation of the posterior surface concentrations denote the robustness of the posterior emissions of ammonia calculated with satellite measurements and our adapted inverse framework.

Data availability. The data generated for the present paper can be downloaded from ZENODO (https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7646462). FLEXPARTv10.4 is open access and can be downloaded from https://www.flexpart.eu/downloads, while use of ERA5 data is free of charge, worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free and perpetual. The inversion algorithm LS-APC is open access from https://www.utia.cas.cz/linear_inversion_methods. CrIS ammonia can be obtained by request to Dr. M. Shephard (Mark.Shephard@ec.gc.ca). EMEP measurements are open in https://ebas.nilu.no. FLEXPART SRMs for 2013–2020 can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.

Competing interests. The authors declare no competing interests.

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Author contributions. O.T. adapted the inversion algorithm, performed the calculations, analyses and wrote the paper. S.E. adapted FLEXPARTv10.4 to model ammonia chemical loss. Y.B. and D.H. set up the CTM model and performed the simulation, the output of which was used as input in FLEXPART. N.E. performed the FLEXPART simulations, contributed to analyses, wrote and coordinated the paper. All authors contributed to the final version of the manuscript.

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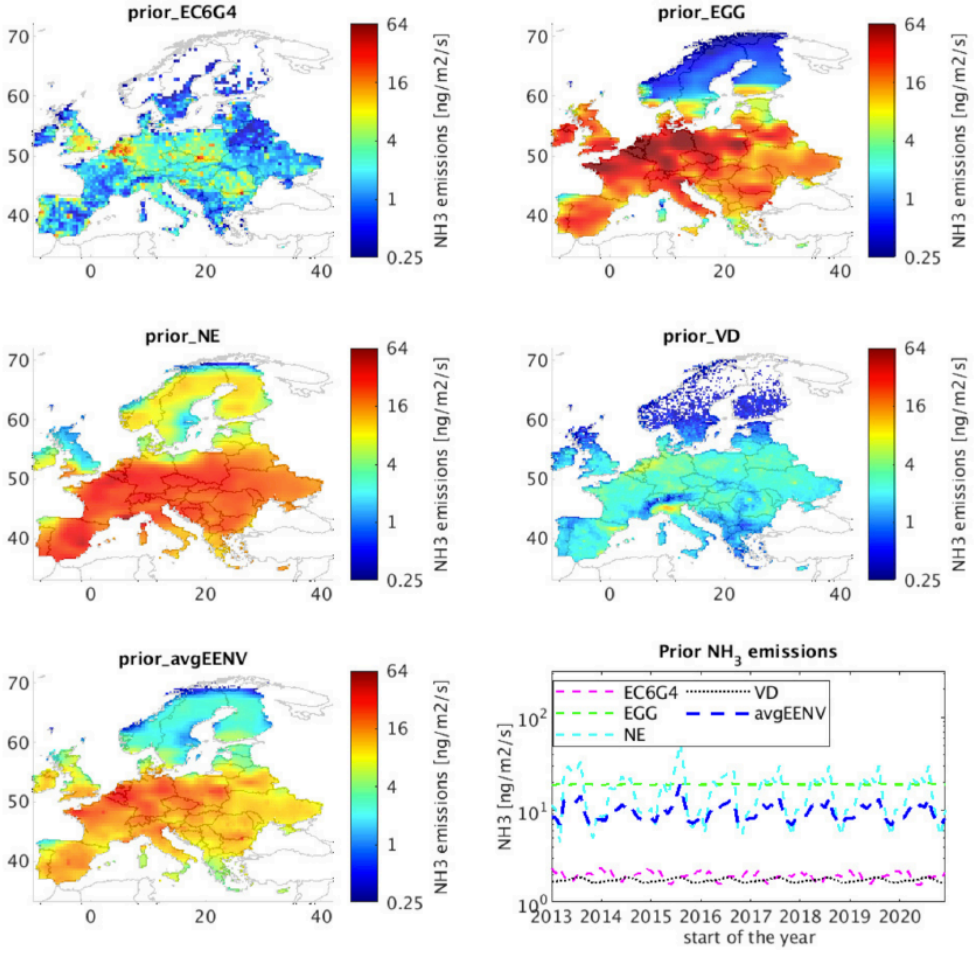
878 **FIGURES & LEGENDS**



879

880 **Figure 1.** Four ammonia prior emissions (EC6G4, EGG, NE, VD) are displayed in the first two
881 rows. The combined prior (avgEENV) is displayed in the bottom left. The temporal activity of
882 all five prior emissions is given in bottom right.

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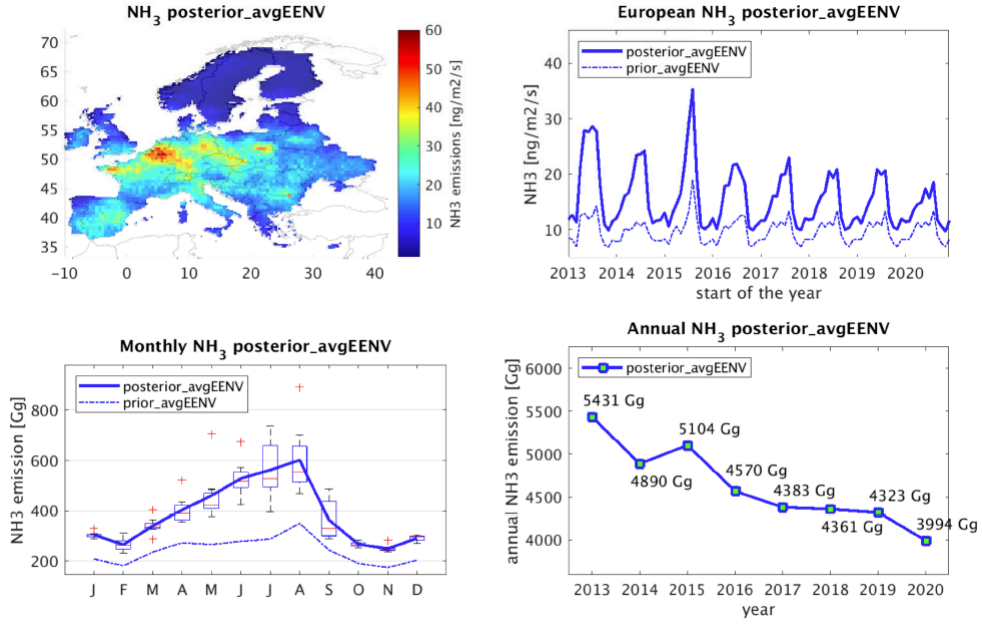

Figure 2. The spatial distribution of posterior ammonia emissions (posterior_EENV, top-left) together with its temporal distribution (top-right). Monthly average (bottom-left) and annually average (bottom-right) estimates are also plotted. The monthly average posterior emissions are accompanied by the box plot where the red line indicates the median, the bottom and top edges of the Boxes indicating the 25th and 75th percentiles, respectively, and the whiskers extend to the most extreme data points not considered as outliers, which are denoted using red crosses. Solid blue lines refer to the posterior ammonia emissions, while dashed ones to the prior emissions (avgEENV).

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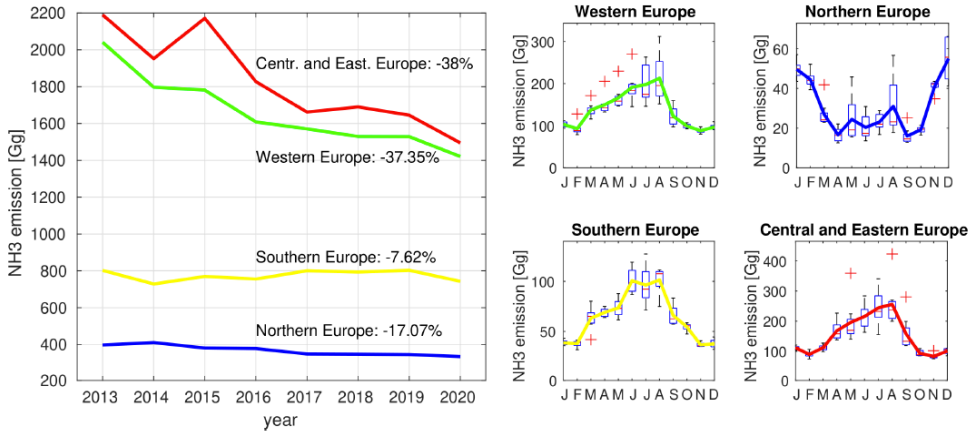

894

895 **Figure 3.** Left: Annual posterior emissions of ammonia in Southern (yellow), Western (green),
896 Northern (blue), and Central and Eastern (red) Europe. Right: Monthly average posterior
897 emissions of ammonia accompanied by box plots, where the red line indicates the median, the
898 bottom and top edges of the box indicate the 25th and 75th percentiles, respectively, and the
899 whiskers extend to the most extreme data points (not considered outliers), which are represented
900 using red crosses.

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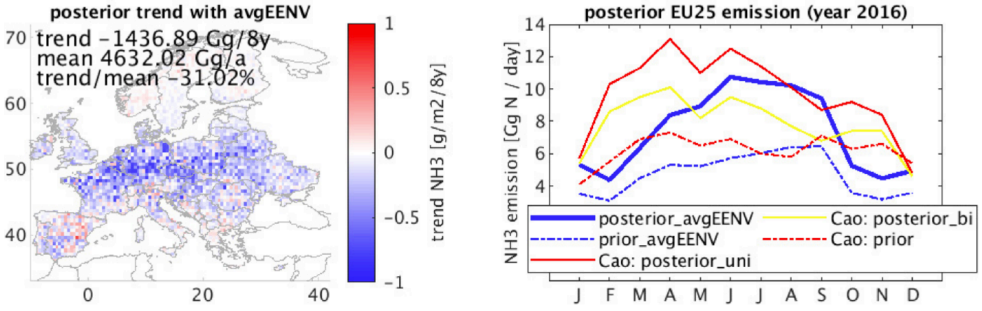

Figure 4. Left: spatial distribution of ammonia emission trends computed for the studied period 2013–2020 in the same way as in (Luo et al., 2022), where also trend, mean, and trend/mean are defined/computed in the same way. Right: comparison of ammonia emissions from the EU25 countries for the year 2016 from our posterior calculations (posterior_avgEENV, blue) and results from Cao et al. (2022) (posterior_uni in red and posterior_bi, in yellow).

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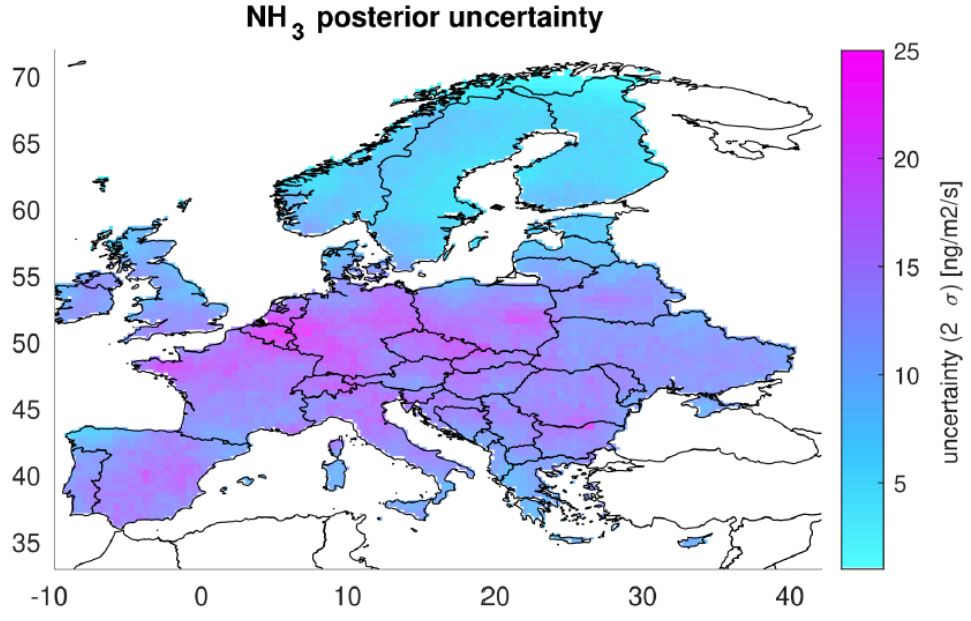

Figure 5. Absolute uncertainty of posterior emissions of ammonia calculated as 2 σ averaged for the whole study period 2013–2020.

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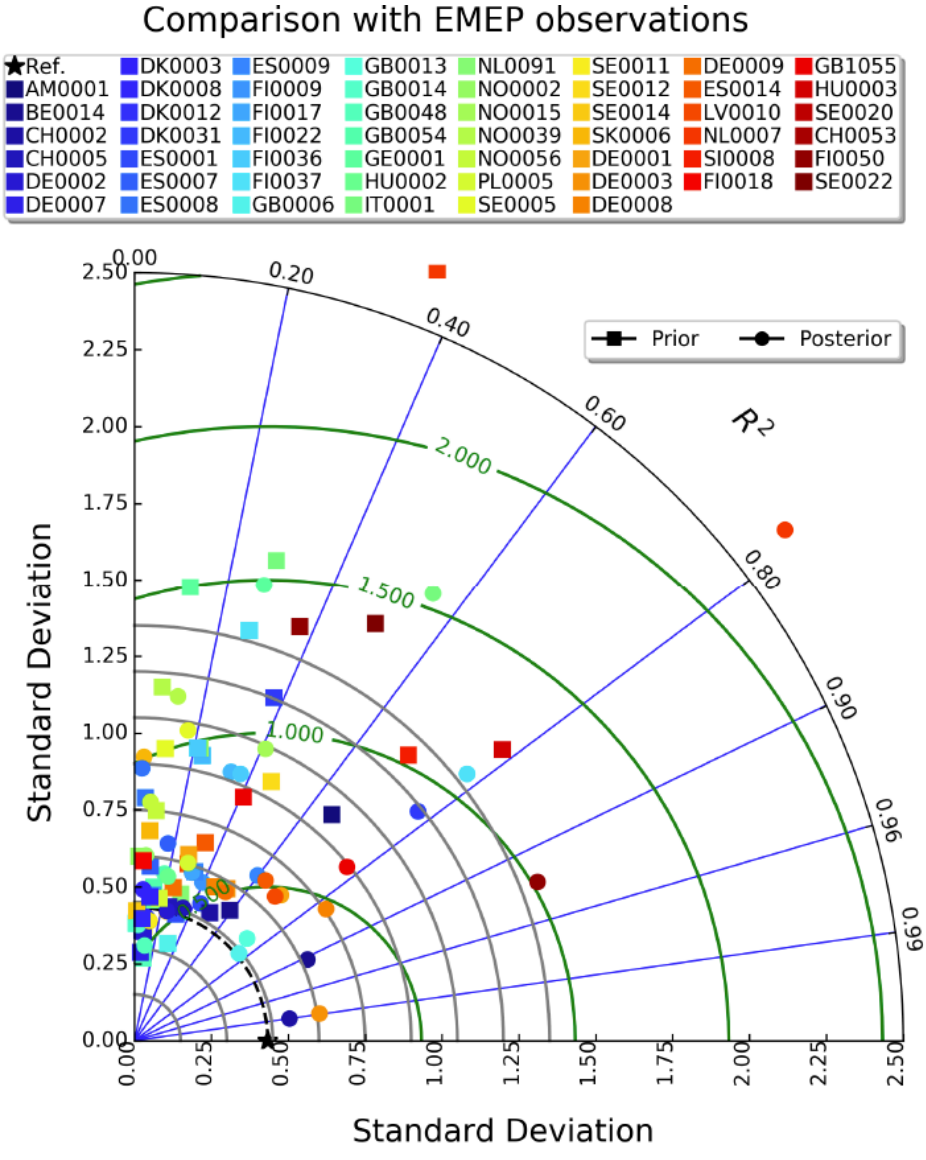

Figure 6. Modelled concentrations of ammonia with prior and posterior emissions against ground-based observations from 53 EMEP stations for 2013–2020 presented in a Taylor diagram. The diagram shows the Pearson's correlation coefficient (gauging similarity in pattern between the modelled and observed concentrations) that is related to the azimuthal angle (blue contours); the standard deviation of modelled concentrations of ammonia is proportional to the radial distance from the origin (black contours) and the centered normalized RMSE of modelled concentrations is proportional to the distance from the reference standard deviation (green contours).