



Waterborne Days conference showcases strength of the European waterborne community

The European waterborne transport sector brings together over 300 participants for two days to discuss its future. All segments were represented in the collaborative conversations as the sector looks to strengthen its position as a supporter of the green and digital transition

Brussels, 27 September 2023

On September 26th and 27th the **Waterborne Days**, an interactive two-day conference held at the Sofitel Brussels Europe, brought together 300 participants. Leaders from the waterborne transport sector and representatives of the Directorate-General of Research and Innovation (DG RTD), the Directorate General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), Directorate General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA) and the European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) came together to boost innovation and development under the framework of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) of the sector, addressing its challenges in the green and digital transition.

Discussions covered six different thematic panel debates focused on different ship types, providing a comprehensive overview on the developments in the waterborne transport sector which is fundamentally important to EU strategies. In addition, the stakeholders engaged in collaborative discussions on the SRIA – contributing into the update of the agenda on Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport, part of the [Partnership](#) between the European Commission and the Waterborne Technology Platform, with a focus on developing the strengths of the industry.

Mrs. Rosalinde van der Vlies, Director, Clean Planet, DG RTD – European Commission, stated: *“The EU has the clear legal and political mandate to become climate neutral by 2050. One of the most challenging aspects will be to decarbonize the waterborne transport sector. To achieve this, we need to push the boundaries of technology forward, towards a new green technological revolution. The sector is incredibly complex, and the technology is always evolving. With this event, the European Commission will assess how its 2021 R&I waterborne transport strategy - published under the Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport Partnership – has performed so far, what are the achieved goals, which ones are the technological gaps that still need to be filled, and what is the priority for them.”*

Eero Lehtovaara, Chair of the Board of Directors, Waterborne TP, concluded: *“The European waterborne transport sector is of key importance to the EU. Shipowners, shipyards, maritime equipment manufacturers, ports and terminals, infrastructure and service providers, universities, research institutes and employees in waterborne transport serve many purposes, including the transportation of goods and passengers. The sector is critical for Europe’s trade and economy, with almost 90% of international trade, 81% of the EU’s external trade and 34% of the EU’s internal trade being carried by ships. The European waterborne transport sector also ensures 4.2 million direct jobs in the EU and contributes over €5,00 billion to EU’s yearly GDP. Committed to and investing in strengthening its position as a worldwide frontrunner, the sector embraces the green and digital transformation. The discussions over the past two days are of essence to update our Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas, with a focus on defining European priorities for research, development and the deployment of innovations.”*

On top of the exciting discussions, the Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport Partnership and the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership announced their cooperation to ensure synergies and alignment in their efforts essential for the future of European oceans and waters.



WATERBORNE TP has been set up as an industry-oriented Technology Platform to establish a continuous dialogue between all waterborne stakeholders, such as classification societies, shipbuilders, shipowners, maritime equipment manufacturers, infrastructure and service providers, universities or research institutes, and with the EU Institutions, including Member States (www.waterborne.eu). The members of Waterborne TP comprise members as well as associated members from both maritime and inland navigation countries, representing about 19 Member States. In addition, the Associations member of the Waterborne Technology Platform represent the broader waterborne sector throughout the entire EU.

Enquiries concerning how to join and become more closely involved in the “Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport” partnership or other activities of the Waterborne TP can be sent to: Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General Waterborne TP, jaap.gebraad@waterborne.eu, tel: +32 493 835 626

The LASTING project seeks to broaden engagement of the waterborne transport sector in European RD&I activities, by developing and implementing a long-lasting communication campaign that increases stakeholder engagement in the sector and thereby the impact of European waterborne transport RD&I. This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101006923