

EU Blue Economy report 2024: innovation and sustainability drive growth

The EU Blue Economy report highlights growth of the sector in the coming years, driven by the transition to a sustainable and circular economy, the ambitious net zero climate targets, and a focus on innovation and research.

Brussels, 04 June 2024

On 30 May 2024, the European Commission published the [EU Blue Economy Report 2024](#). According to the report, the EU's focus on blue innovation, research and entrepreneurship supported by different funding and policy instruments is expected to continue to stimulate growth in the blue economy, leading to the creation of new jobs and economic opportunities. The report underlines trends and drivers as well, like digitalisation and automation. In addition, the report highlights numerous examples of projects co-financed by Horizon 2020, the European Union's Research and Innovation Programme, setting the course for market deployment or further upscaling of innovations.

The report focusses amongst others on port activities, shipbuilding and repair, maritime transport and coastal tourism. All of these, are relevant for the activities of the Waterborne Technology Platform, being the European Technology Platform for the waterborne industries, providing policy guidance to the European institutions regarding research, development and innovation, as well as the deployment of these innovations.

As an example, the report highlights the developments in Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS). According to the report, this trend is amongst others seen to improve working conditions, save fuel by optimising routes, and reduce human errors and accidents. Horizon 2020 projects are also addressing the topic, like the [Autoship project](#) (building and operating two autonomous inland vessels), the [AEGIS project](#) (autonomous navigation and cargo handling), and the [MOSES project](#) (autonomous vessel manoeuvring and docking scheme).

The report is specifically relevant for the implementation of the [Long-term Strategy](#) of the Waterborne Technology Platform, and respectively defining the missions and visions towards 2040 and 2050 of the Association. For its three working groups, Ships & Shipping, Ports & Logistics and Blue Growth, the discussion on long term objectives will kick-off in June 2024.

Eero Lehtovaara, Chair of the Board of Directors, Waterborne TP, added: *“The report shows the strength of the EU's Blue Economy, and subsequently its importance. The EU Blue Economy is essential to safeguard supply chains, energy supply, security, defense, food and sustainability. Furthermore, the report highlights the driving role of research, development and innovation, and the added value of EU-cofinancing. European framework programmes are essential to develop solutions for societal challenges, whilst remaining competitive. More specifically, the cooperation between public and private stakeholders in shaping the content of Horizon Europe is significant. It is for this reason, that the coming period will be essential in shaping the next European Research and Innovation Programme, Framework Programme 10, and ensuring a sufficient budget. This will be critical to retain technology leadership whilst being competitive at the same moment in time”.*



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 20 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