

Report by Mario Draghi calls for a dedicated waterborne public-private partnership

Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the report by Maria Draghi, which calls for the launch of a dedicated waterborne public-private partnership concerning decarbonisation and digitalisation

Brussels, 10 September 2024

On 09 September, Mario Draghi presented the [report on the future of EU competitiveness](#), which contributes to the European Commission's work on a new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness. In addition, the report provides input to the development of the new Clean Industrial Deal for competitive industries and quality jobs, which will be presented in the first 100 days of the new Commission mandate.

This report identifies three main areas for action to ensure sustainable growth, notably:

- Refocussing Europe's collective efforts on closing the innovation gap with the US and China, especially in advanced technologies.
- A joint plan for decarbonisation and competitiveness
- Increasing security and reducing dependencies

In the [in-depth analysis and recommendations](#) of the report presented by Mario Draghi, one of the concrete actions proposed is the launch of dedicated EU public-private partnerships, also for the waterborne sector. These partnerships are crucial research, development and innovation instruments for the decarbonisation and digitalisation of the different transport sectors. It is recommended that the European Commission provides a range of supporting tools to foster innovation until market deployment. For the waterborne sector, examples of key targets and priorities identified in the report are: Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS), modern inland waterway vessels adapted to new river conditions, and offshore wind platform technologies. In addition, the piloting of sustainable renewable and low-carbon fuels is a priority.

To further support research, development and innovation, it is recommended for the European Commission to offer a wide range of instruments, which all transport segments could leverage, to be activated at different technology readiness levels, including a reinforced 10th Framework Programme for research and innovation, which should extend to the phase of deployment to market. This programme should have AI and automation, cybersecurity and emissions reduction among overarching R&I priorities across all transport segments. It should also leverage the dual use nature of certain technologies and synergies with adjacent industries (e.g offshore, green steel).

The report is specifically relevant for the implementation of the [long-term strategy](#) of the Waterborne Technology Platform, which is centred around technology leadership in waterborne. In this definition, all segments of the European waterborne transport sector (ranging from shipyards, maritime equipment manufacturers, shipowners, research institutes and academia to public stakeholders) play a key role, and the functioning of the entire sector will be pivotal to ensure that the EU's waterborne transport sector remains a global leader and offers quality jobs. Sustainability and digitalisation are among the main topics of this long-term strategy.



Eero Lehtovaara, Chair of the Board of Directors, Waterborne TP, said: *“We warmly welcome the Report by Mario Draghi which calls for a dedicated waterborne public-private partnership. The emphasis on the urgency to support RD&I at different Technology Readiness Levels is very timely and needed. For the waterborne sector, with its large variety of players, ranging from SMEs to large multinationals, a public-private partnership is crucial to mobilise a critical mass that is committed to the development of the necessary knowledge and technology, ensuring its deployment. Furthermore, the extension with deployment mechanisms is much welcomed, to cross the bridge between technological maturity and economic viability. Regarding the proposed new Competitiveness Joint Undertaking(s), its implications in terms of governance, flexibility and the inclusion of certain sectors, whilst having competitiveness at its core, needs to be carefully considered.”*

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