



A green and digital transition of the waterborne sector at the heart of the new European Commission

Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the emphasis on the green and digital transition of the waterborne sector, and the importance of research, development and innovation, in the mission letters for the Commissioners-designate

Brussels, 18 September 2024

On 17 September, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, presented the next College of Commissioners for the period 2024 – 2029. The [mission letters](#) for the Commissioners-designate are centred around competitiveness, sustainability and digitalisation. These mission letters are a further detailing of the Political Guidelines of the new European Commission, as presented in July 2024. As a next step, Commissioners-designate appear in public hearings at the European Parliament. After that, the Commission as a whole is approved in a single vote of consent by the European Parliament. The European Council, acting by qualified majority, formally appoints the Commission's new leadership.

As regards waterborne transport, the mission letter for Apostolos Tzitzikostas, Commissioner-designate for sustainable transport and tourism spells out the aim to make European waterborne transport more competitive, more sustainable and more resistant to future shocks, as well as to ensure transport is safe, accessible and affordable for all citizens. Increasing modal shift towards sustainable means of transport means and making the most of digital tools, new technologies and innovations will be amongst the key priorities. Furthermore, a Sustainable Transport Investment Plan will be developed, outlining a strategic approach to scaling-up and prioritising investments in transport decarbonisation solutions. In addition, digitalisation should continue to drive the modernisation of transport systems. Finally, the development of a new industrial maritime strategy and a comprehensive EU Port Strategy are on the action list for the Commissioner-designate for sustainable transport and tourism.

As regards Fisheries and Oceans, in the mission letter for the Commissioner-Designate Costas Kadis, the development of an EU Ocean Research and Innovation Strategy is foreseen, building upon the EU Mission "To restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030". Finally, Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner-designate for startups, research and innovation, will be responsible for the development of an EU start-up and scale-up strategy, which will improve framework conditions. Furthermore, extensive work is foreseen to further simplify access to research funding, especially for innovative SMEs and small midcaps.

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 emphasis on the green and digital transition of the waterborne sector in the mission letters for the Commissioners-designate. The importance of research, development and innovation is a stimulating development, which requires a joint and coordinated approach by the waterborne ecosystem. Furthermore, the Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the organisation of implementation dialogues with stakeholders, to align with the developments in the sector. The emphasis on the deployment of innovations, by means of the Sustainable Transport Investment Plan, as well as the much-needed attention for start-ups and SMEs in the research, development and innovation ecosystem, are much welcomed. All these elements form a basis to further develop the implementation plan of our long-term strategy, i.e. our Strategic Research Agenda (SRA). This SRA will be presented during the upcoming edition of the Waterborne Days, scheduled for 04 and 05 February 2025 in Brussels. We are looking forward to engaging with all relevant public and private stakeholders to jointly develop and implement this SRA.”*

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