

Deployment of innovations in the European waterborne sector

Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the selection of waterborne projects in the framework of the EU Innovation Fund. To be able to comply with environmental targets, the deployment of innovations needs to be further increased and requires a targeted approach

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On 23 October, the European Commission selected 85 innovative net-zero projects to receive €4.8 billion in grants in total from the [Innovation Fund](#), with the aim to implement clean technologies across Europe. The selected projects particularly contribute to reaching EU policy objectives, including net-zero mobility. In the area of net-zero mobility, the selected projects will reduce emissions in the transport sector, with the maritime sector benefiting the most. These projects involve building and retrofitting vessels for Renewable Fuels of Non-Biological Origin (RFNBO) and electricity use.

The waterborne sector is dynamic, featuring a diverse array of public and private stakeholders. These stakeholders range from classification societies, shipbuilders, and shipowners (both maritime and inland navigation) to equipment manufacturers, ports, infrastructure and service providers (e.g. dredging), as well as universities and research institutes. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) form the largest part of the EU waterborne sector and play a crucial role in the sector and the European economy. The various stakeholder groups offer a wide range of services, trades and products. For example, the global fleet can be categorized by different ship types and services, classified according to power requirements and autonomy. These categories include inland waterway transport vessels, ferries, short sea, cruise, intercontinental and offshore ships. Further distinctions must be made between liner and tramp shipping and their business models, as well as between retrofitting existing vessels and building new ones. Taking these characteristics into account, by applying fit-for-purpose criteria and procedures in the upcoming calls, is essential for facilitating the deployment of innovations for all segments of the sector. And finally, the Waterborne Technology Platform fully support the call for sufficient quantity of sustainable alternative fuels at a competitive price, available in ports of call. This will be key to be able to successfully deploy innovations in the waterborne sector.

Considering these specificities, including the average lifetime of a vessel and meeting the environmental targets set, is a race against the clock. The sector is committed to developing and deploying solutions to the benefit of future generations. However, to be able to deploy these innovations today, further amendments to current mechanisms might be needed. This could include matching criteria with the different characteristics of waterborne sector segments and supporting a systematic approach towards decarbonisation, which includes the entire ecosystem.

Eero Lehtovaara, Chair of the Board of Directors, Waterborne TP, said: *“We warmly welcome the results of the call for proposals in the framework of the Innovation Fund. The results include a mix of both energy supply, and integration of technologies on board. In addition, the most recent results of the auction mechanism in the Innovation Fund presented specific waterborne projects in terms of dedicated fuel supply for maritime offtakes. We also express our gratitude for the principle of co-designing mechanisms like the EU Innovation Fund, in the context of the diversified European waterborne sector. In the coming months, we will continue to work on strengthening the deployment of innovations, which will be one of the key themes during the upcoming edition of the [Waterborne Days 2025](#). Together we will be able to achieve sustainable competitiveness, to the benefit of us all.”*



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