



Towards a competitive, resilient and sustainable waterborne sector

The Waterborne Technology Platform publishes its proposal for an industrial Co-Programmed Partnership under Framework Programme 10, centred around Waterborne Technology Leadership.

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The European waterborne sector is a technology leader and holds a global leading position in high-technology shipbuilding, as well as in green and smart port and shipping technologies. European companies supply almost half of the world's maritime equipment and contribute substantially to the design and development of most of the global fleet's power systems. The solutions developed by the European maritime technology sector are key for dual-use purposes, significantly contributing to EU preparedness, security and overall resilience.

The European maritime fleet is among the largest in the world, representing 35% of the global shipping fleet. Furthermore, the European waterborne sector includes approximately 12,000 inland navigation vessels, which are essential for intra-EU trade.

European Ports are gateways for trade, logistics, energy and military mobility, and serve as strategic hubs that enable the energy transition, promote modal shift, and advance the decarbonisation of the waterborne sector.

However, the sector is facing several challenges, which require a tailored, coordinated policy and research response. The Draghi report on EU competitiveness highlighted the challenges faced by the waterborne sector arising from intensifying international competition and evolving geopolitical developments. Distortive competition on the global market continues to strongly affect the sector, a situation that is further complicated by substantial public investments in research, development and innovation in competing regions.

Furthermore, increased labour shortages combined with the growing demand for the waterborne sector, the transition to a zero-emission sector, and the further shift of cargo towards waterborne transport as part of the modal shift, are challenges which demand a joint and coordinated approach.

The transition to a competitive, resilient and sustainable waterborne sector requires a comprehensive, mission-driven research and innovation strategy. This strategy should enable rapid technological progress, accelerated demonstration and deployment, strengthened industrial competitiveness, and the seamless integration of innovations across vessels, ports, infrastructure and the expanding blue economy. The waterborne sector's transformation is uniquely complex: waterborne assets have long lifespans, vessels operate globally under diverse regulatory regimes, rely on specialised fuels and equipment, and depend on interoperable port and logistics systems. These characteristics make coordinated, large-scale RD&I investment indispensable to deliver climate neutrality, digital excellence, resilience, safety and security, and European technology leadership. Therefore, a Co-Programmed Partnership on [Waterborne Technology Leadership](#) in the context of Horizon Europe post 2027 should address the full innovation chain, from fundamental research to large-scale deployment.



Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General, Waterborne TP, said: *“The proposed Partnership will address the full innovation value chain, from fundamental research through to deployment, with a strong emphasis on upscaling solutions and bridging the ‘valley of death’. By supporting technologies in becoming commercially viable and deployable at scale across different waterborne segments and business models, the Partnership will enable uptake and impact. Research, development, innovation and deployment will be structured around interconnected pillars, supporting the transformation of waterborne transport, port ecosystems and the wider blue economy, while strengthening the resilience, competitiveness and sustainability of the European maritime technology sector.”*

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