

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to this 4th and final Maritime Research Policy Conference at the Sofitel Hotel in Brussels.

You will note from today's programme that we have an ambitious agenda, covering a wide variety of issues. I think it is good – even essential – to have ambition in today's world and also in Europe, despite or perhaps because of recent political developments.

Today's maritime industry is confronted with numerous challenges and sometimes even threats. They all merit to be looked at and addressed properly by industry stakeholders as well as decision-makers. But the essential part remains that these challenges and threats need to be tackled appropriately and in time and research, development and innovation are key tools in this respect.

I have been asked to set the scene of today's conference and to focus on the role of waterborne within the European Transport System.

First of all, how does the European Transport System look like?

Interestingly, the Commission's White Paper of 2011, "Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area" considered transport as fundamental to Europe's economy and society and as an enabler of economic growth and job creation. At the same time, transport must be sustainable and become less dependent on oil without sacrificing its efficiency and compromising mobility.

As we all know, the European Transport System consists of a wide variety of modes of transport, including waterborne transport. Each individual mode of transport has its own particularities and challenges. But also the combination of the various modes – in a door-to-door or logistics' context – creates interesting dynamics and challenges.

The importance of the European Transport System for Europe speaks from the following figures:

- There are more than 343,000 road transport passenger companies and about 570,000 road freight transport companies moving passengers and goods in the EU;
- Aviation contributes about 91 billion Euros to the GDP of the EU;
- Shipping transports more than 80% of the EU's external trade by volume and 40% of intra-EU exchanges in terms of ton-kilometers take place via short sea shipping;
- More than 2400 commercial seaports operate along some 70.000 km of EU coasts, with Rotterdam, Hamburg and Antwerp ranking amongst the worlds' top 20 container ports;
- More than 24 billion Euros are available for infrastructure projects in the EU for the period 2014-2020;
- The completion of the TEN-T network can create up to 10 million jobs by 2030;
- 1 out of 20 jobs in Europe is in the transport sector and some 11 million people work in transport-service related jobs.
- Europe is a leader in transport innovation with about one-fourth of the total business R&D expenditure being transport-related.

Within the European Transport System, waterborne transport – which consists of shipping and inland navigation – plays a key role. As already said, 80% of the EU's external freight trade is transported by ships and 40% of intra-EU exchanges in terms of ton-kilometers take place via short sea shipping. But shipping also plays a central role in providing freight connections to Europe's islands and peripheral maritime regions.

On the other hand, although it represents a more modest percentage of the overall EU transport network, inland navigation plays an important role in alleviating the busiest parts of the EU road and rail network from freight transport.

To underline the importance of waterborne transport for the EU, the year 2017 will be the 'Year of Waterborne Transport'.

At the same time waterborne transport also creates a considerable number of important challenges for the EU, not least in terms of environmental performance and energy efficiency. For shipping, for instance, there is a need to

reduce CO2 contribution by 40% - or if feasible by 50% - by 2050, compared to 2005 levels. And by 2030 a shift of 30% of road freight over 300 km to other modes of transport must be realized.

Whilst waterborne transport must cope with these ambitious environmental and energy targets, it must also maintain its dynamism and competitiveness. To reach this target, the European maritime industry must invest in and focus on research, development and innovation.

RDI will indeed be a key tool in assisting waterborne transport in meeting its environmental, energy and other targets. In fact, RDI has also contributed in developing more environmental and more energy-friendly ships or in developing advanced propulsion systems. But the EU's ambition towards 2030 and beyond will require an ongoing investment in RDI activities in Europe.

A key industry in this respect will be the European Maritime Technology industry, with its commercial and naval shipyards, as well as its maritime equipment manufacturers, which are world leaders in producing complex and high-tech vessels as well as equipment for commercial, naval or dual purposes.

After me, Kjeld Dittmann, Managing Director of Wärtsilä Lyngsø Marine A/S and currently chairman of SEA Europe – the association representing the interests of European shipyards and European Maritime Equipment Manufacturers – will highlight the economic importance of this industry for Europe and draw attention to its challenges and threats and how to address them.

The need for a continuous investment in RDI does not only apply to the commercial part of the maritime or shipping industry. Jean-Charles Boulat, Vice President at DCNS – a French industrial group specialized in naval defense and energy – will explain the importance of the European naval industry for Europe and in the world. Naval-related RDI will be essential to allow the EU to remain the second largest naval industry in the world, after the United States, and a world leader in the export market.

RDI is thus key to reaching various targets whilst maintaining or improving the competitiveness of Europe's transport. It would take us too much time to list the various initiatives that have already been adopted with regard to RDI but I would like to concentrate at least on some.

Firstly, there is the Commission's Horizon 2020 Work Programme for 2016 and 2017, which was adopted in 2015 and which foresees up to 938 million Euros in EU funding for transport research and innovation. Horizon 2020 aims at driving progress towards a European transport system that is competitive, climate- and environmentally-friendly, safe and seamless for the benefits of the passengers, businesses and society as a whole. Specific topics in this program are more efficient and greener logistics, new mobility services, or the development of resilient and safer transport infrastructure.

Secondly, there is the Waterborne Technology Platform. This platform was created in 2005 at the initiative of the then Maritime Industries Forum and consists of a variety of European maritime-related associations. Also Member States are involved in the work of this Technology Platform through the so-called Mirror Group.

Since its creation, the Waterborne Technology Platform has produced a wide variety of initiatives or positions. Most recently its contribution to the Commission's consultation on the Horizon 2020 Work Programme.

However, whilst the Waterborne Technology Platform has paved the way for what today exists in terms of maritime-related RDI, there is room for improvement or a need to adapt to changing circumstances. Two elements are worth to be mentioned:

Firstly, there is an increased focus on the transport side of Waterborne, with initiatives such as SETRIS, STRIA, TRA or the Vessels for the Future-association, on which Pierre Sames from DNVGL and Chairman of the Vessels for the Future association will inform us today.

But waterborne is more than transport alone. Waterborne also consists of a series of activities such as oil and gas exploration and exploitation, offshore supply vessels, windmill parks at sea, carriage of energy in tankers, rescue and safety at sea, dredging, naval operations, etc. All together they are known as Blue Growth activities.

To adapt itself to ever changing circumstances, some key players from the waterborne community have started looking at ways to enhance the role of the Technology Platform and to improve its structure so as to make it more efficient. The Chairman of the Waterborne Technology Platform, Willem Laros, will enlighten us on these discussions later today.

A third R&D initiative worth mentioning is MESA – the Maritime Europe Strategy Action. MESA was launched to support the activities of the Waterborne Technology Platform, primarily by updating the Platform’s Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda. MESA also aims at strengthening the effectiveness of the research and innovation capacities of the European maritime industry, by optimizing European maritime RDI strategies, by increasing the visibility of new maritime RDI findings; and by helping to define future maritime RDI transport policies.

Later we will hear from Ken Wittamore and Henk Prins whether MESA has been able to meet its expectations and whether it has enabled the industry to meet its challenges.

Mr. Fotis Karamitsos – acting deputy director general at DG MOVE – will inform us on how DG MOVE perceives the work of maritime-related RDI and the Waterborne Technology Platform. It will also be interesting to hear from Mr. Karamitsos whether there is a role for the Waterborne Technology Platform in the context of DG MOVE’s mid-term maritime strategy review.

Today, door-to-door transport or logistics are at least as important as the individual modes of transport themselves. The challenges that exist for the EU with regard to each mode of transport therefore also apply in relation to the combination of the various transport modes. Optimising the performance of multimodal logistic chains, including making greater use of inherently more resource-efficient modes, is thus one of the key challenge for the EU in the coming years.

To reach that target, the European Commission is working together with stakeholders to support the creation of a favorable framework for logistics services that aims at combining optimally the various modes of transport and at exploiting each one’s strength whilst minimizing the weaknesses. This matter or target is also at the core of the so-called SETRIS- Project, a kind of cross-cutting platform, which brings the various modes of transport and their respective technology platforms together with an aim at delivering a cohesive and coordinated approach to research and innovation strategies for all transport modes in Europe and at identifying synergies between the respective strategic and research and innovation agendas of these modes. A clear illustration of the work of SETRIS are the bi-annual TRA events where researchers, industry representatives and policy-makers meet to discuss the allocation of resources

and funding schemes to transport or to identify innovative solutions for a better future transport system for Europe.

I would like to conclude by referring to a recent Commission initiative known as STRIA or “Strategic Transport Research and Innovation Agenda” in full. STRIA aims at identifying the options leading to low carbon transport and mobility and the potential contribution of technologies to the achievement of the EU climate, energy and competitiveness goals. Furthermore, STRIA aims at prioritizing the policy options that will support research and innovation in a number of technical areas such as alternative fuels, electro-mobility transport infrastructure or connected and automated transport. With STRIA, the European Commission hopes to avoid silo-thinking and at creating an integrated long-term transport Research and Innovation Strategy linked to relevant sectors such as energy and ICT.

STRIA will undoubtedly offer new opportunities to all transport industries, including waterborne. I look forward to hearing more about STRIA from Liam Breslin from DG RTD but the first indications of this new Commission initiative look very promising.

On this point, I would like to wish you an interesting day and I hope that today’s conference will meet your expectations and shed light on the various initiatives that the transport communities in general and the waterborne community in particular are busy with. And let’s not forget that at the end of the conference, there will be a reception that will provide you with an excellent opportunity to network.

I wish you an excellent day and thank you for your attention.