
# LONG TERM STRATEGY

*TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP IN WATERBORNE*

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This document encompasses the key outcomes of the strategic reflection, conducted by the Board of Waterborne in 2022 and 2023, and the General Assembly in April 2023. The document entails the objective of the Waterborne Technology Platform, the key activities, as well as a long term vision. The long term strategy has been adopted by the General Assembly on 15 February 2024.

# 1 TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP IN WATERBORNE

Research, Development and Innovation are key to retain or increase the competitiveness of the European waterborne sector. Competitiveness implies that the results of Research, Development and Innovation, provide the European waterborne sector with a frontrunners position regarding the technology developed. In addition, it implies a competitive advantage of the waterborne transport sector in comparison with other modes of transport.

It is clear that other elements related to competitiveness (like international trade) are not in the mandate of the Waterborne Technology Platform. However, **Technology Leadership** will be essential to remain a worldwide frontrunner in the design, production, development and implementation of innovative technologies and solutions.

The development of solutions is often interlinked with policy developments. Policies, for example defined to protect the climate, mitigate climate change, stimulate economic development, improve the life of citizens and ensure strategic autonomy of the EU. **Technology Leadership** implies being a frontrunner in enabling the transformation, which entails developing and deploying competitive solutions which mitigate climate change, which provide the capability to become climate resilient, eliminate all harmful pollutants, improve working conditions or create new jobs, and stimulate economic prosperity. And all of these, in a safe and secure manner. The Waterborne Technology Platform and its membership represent a broad base of knowledge and thereby the Waterborne Technology Platform is representing Technology Leadership. For the coming years, digitalisation, circularity (or sustainability in the broader sense of the word) and competitiveness will be the key hooks for the activities to be exploited. These three angles will provide the members of the Waterborne Technology Platform with the Technology Leadership envisaged, and, at the same time, are already integrated in the Mission, Vision and Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda's of the Association.

# 2 ACTIVITIES

The key activity of the Waterborne TP is providing policy guidance regarding Research, Development and Innovation, and till a certain extend deployment, towards the European institutions. In order to be able to do so, the Association defines the research needs of the broader European waterborne sector, in the context of forward looking exercises (e.g. with the timeline of 2030 or 2050). Thereby, hackathon type of events might stimulate discussions with a longer time horizon then tomorrow or the next two or three years. The definition of research needs can be conducted at multiple levels, however the IRAGs are the primary working groups focussing on this activity. More strategic discussions between the sector and the relevant European institutions can be organised in dedicated high level events, potentially co-organised with relevant European trade associations.

In the context of deployment, the Waterborne TP will provide input to funding mechanisms stimulating deployment of innovations, in order to ensure a pipeline of funding is established to introduce new technologies and concepts in the market. In addition, the Waterborne TP might provide input regarding experiences gained with applying for certain funding schemes.

Providing policy guidance and lobbying are closely related, however, the Waterborne TP is not a typical trade association, and thereby does not provide policy guidance on political files. To give an example, the Waterborne TP provides input to the EU Innovation Fund in the context of the Co-Programmed Partnership on Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport, shares experiences with the relevant EU Commission Services in order to improve the applicability of the fund, but does not provide guidance when it concerns establishing a dedicated waterborne transport funding mechanism. The latter is in the remit of the European trade associations.

To exploit Research, Development and Innovation, and to subsequently deploy innovations, the Waterborne TP will explore other relevant European funding mechanisms. This will create more opportunities to co-finance RD&I and deployment activities, and ideally it will lead to a pipeline of funding mechanisms, stretching from research to deployment of innovations.

# 3 DEPLOYMENT OF INNOVATIONS

Often, RD&I activities in the context of projects co-financed by the EU or Member States are explored until a certain TRL level (TRL8). However, the final steps of undertaking RD&I to be able to implement end products in the market, are often high risk, high capital investments. In addition to other ongoing activities, the Waterborne TP will support the execution of these essential last steps, by ensuring dedicated funding streams co-financed by the EU and/or Member States to foster the last steps of RD&I, including specific emphasis of the inclusion of SMEs in these activities.


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