

## Research, development, innovation and its deployment critical for a resilient, competitive and sustainable waterborne sector

Waterborne Technology Platform calls for a dedicated [co-programmed partnership](#) as essential building block of the upcoming industrial waterborne and port strategies.

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The waterborne sector is dynamic, featuring a diverse array of public and private stakeholders. These stakeholders include classification societies, shipbuilders, shipowners (both maritime and inland navigation), 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 broader European economy. The various stakeholder groups offer a wide range of services, trades and products, with the global fleet categorized by ship types and services based on power requirements and autonomy. These categories include **inland waterway transport vessels, ferries, short sea, cruise, intercontinental and offshore ships as well as underwater and unmanned vehicles**. Further distinctions exist between liner and tramp shipping and their respective business models, as well as between retrofitting existing vessels and building new ones.

Digitalisation and sustainability (including circularity) are of key importance to enhance resilience and 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 technologies developed. In addition, it reflects the advantages of the waterborne transport sector compared to other modes of transport.

Further enhancing and deploying zero-emission solutions (including circularity) and digitalisation, including enhancing the capability of the European maritime technology sector, will be critical to ensure a prosperous future of the sector. A competitive value chain also heavily depends on a **resilient supply chain** that can source the entire product from raw materials to finished high-tech parts. Reliable delivery equally requires a well-connected and innovative trans-European network.

Developing and deploying zero-emission and digital solutions and products (such as vessels and platforms) requires the involvement of all key stakeholders and joint investments from ports, shipowners, shipyards, equipment manufacturers, infrastructure and service providers and the research community as well as the public side. Close cooperation with the different European Commission Services and EU Member States needs to further strengthen the Team Europe approach, ensuring collective progress towards a resilient, competitive and sustainable waterborne future.

Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General, Waterborne TP, said: *“Research, development, innovation and their deployment are key to enhancing the technology leadership of the European waterborne sector. Technology leadership means being a frontrunner in enabling transformation, by developing and deploying competitive solutions to mitigate climate change, providing the capability to become climate resilient, eliminate all harmful pollutants, improve working conditions and create new jobs, and stimulate economic prosperity. The current Co-Programmed Partnership on Zero-emission Waterborne Transport offers a unique stepping stone to achieving the objectives of the European Clean Industrial Deal, delivering tangible results scalable at European level also in the long-term. As for the period 2028 – 2035, considering the large number of SMEs in the sector, the implementation mode of a co-programmed partnership centred around the transition to a resilient, competitive and sustainable waterborne sector is the most suitable, ensuring that no one is left behind.”*



**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](http://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](mailto:jaap.gebraad@waterborne.eu), tel: +32 493 835 626