



Horizon Europe – key for jointly investing resources in research and innovation for a competitive future

Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe, underlining the critical role of European Partnerships to facilitate market uptake of innovations

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On 30 April 2025, the European Commission published the [interim evaluation of Horizon Europe](#), the EU's flagship research and innovation programme for 2021-2027. The evaluation is very timely, as the European Commission is currently developing a proposal for the next budget of the EU, the so called Multiannual Financial Framework 2028 – 2035. In this light, it is key to build upon the strengths of Horizon Europe and its predecessors, to ensure the next European Framework Programme will be designed to further boost competitiveness by means of collaborative research and innovation.

According to the interim evaluation, Horizon Europe enables the EU to build a broad knowledge base and a strong research and innovation pipeline, enabling it to promote the EU economic competitiveness in present and future technologies. The evaluation revealed that one euro of costs associated with Horizon Europe brings up to six euros of benefits for EU citizens over the period of 2020 to 2045. Furthermore, the evaluation points at collaboration being a key driver of pooling resources for competitiveness by means of research and innovation, as well as a key driver for excellence. One essential tool of collaboration is the European Partnerships. According to the report, they align and pool research and innovation investments across the EU, national and regional institutions and between industry and academia. This close collaboration facilitates market uptake. By linking up with the strategic research and innovation agendas, the European Partnership promote a coordinated approach to the EU's priorities.

The current [Co-Programmed Partnership on Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport](#) is one of the European Partnerships within Horizon Europe. The Partnership will provide and demonstrate zero-emission solutions for all main ship types and services before 2030, enabling zero-emission waterborne transport before 2050. The Partnership is critical to achieve policy objectives, and is relying on the interdependent waterborne value chain, which is key to achieve success. 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.



Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General, Waterborne TP, said: *“The European Framework Programmes, and specifically the European Partnerships facilitated by them, will remain key to achieve policy objectives. The transition to a resilient, competitive and sustainable European waterborne sector, as envisaged by the upcoming industrial waterborne and port strategies, will heavily depend on the next steps in research, development, innovation and the deployment of innovations. The highly interdependent ecosystem of the waterborne sector (public and private stakeholders alike) must work together to pave the way for research, development, innovation and its deployment. This includes aligning with the policy priorities of both strategies, in close coordination with Member States. A co-programmed partnership driving the transition to a resilient, competitive and sustainable waterborne sector must focus on disruptive technologies and solutions for today, as well as for the future, covering the full innovation lifecycle. Furthermore, a stronger focus on deployment will not only ensure the timely achievement of European strategy objectives, but also drive the growth of the partnership’s financial leverage.”*

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