

Technology leadership recognised by EU Member States as key building block of the industrial maritime strategy

Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the Szczecin Declaration, in which EU Member States call to ensure European technology leadership across the waterborne value chain.

Brussels, 19 May 2025

The Szczecin declaration was adopted by 21 European Union Member States on 15 May 2025. The declaration calls on the European Commission to adopt the EU Industrial Maritime Strategy (hereafter referred to as ‘Strategy’), and to set out an ambitious, comprehensive, and fit-for-purpose holistic framework to support the EU maritime sector and Blue Economy. EU Member States identified “reinforcing global competitiveness of the EU shipping, shipbuilding and maritime manufacturing industry”, “enabling a fair and feasible energy transition while presenting the global competitiveness of EU shipping and shipbuilding” and “supporting the EU industrial naval capacity and autonomy” as key objectives of the upcoming strategy.

According to the declaration, ensuring the European technology leadership across the waterborne value chain, by investments in research, development and deployment of innovations to achieve the green and digital transition will be one of the key actions to be included in the Strategy. This should support competitiveness, sustainability and resilience of the waterborne sector, with a dedicated budget in the next Multiannual Financial framework. Furthermore, facilitating access to European funding for decarbonisation projects in the maritime transport and inland navigation sector is flagged as a priority. Member states call to build on existing research and innovation instruments available for the maritime industry at European level to ensure renewal and leadership in cutting-edge technologies, essential for decarbonising the sector.

Other important elements of the Szczecin declaration include the development of shipbuilding infrastructures capable of constructing a wide range of vessels, digitalisation and scalable use of advanced technologies, as well as support for fleet renewal and retrofitting of different ship types. Specific attention is being requested for the inclusion of small and medium-sized (SMEs) enterprises in the different actions of the upcoming strategy. Furthermore, all segments, including liner and tramp shipping, should be considered, complemented by targeted actions related to jobs and skills. Finally, the document includes specific actions related to ports, such as supporting the installation of alternative fuels and shore-based electricity facilities.

Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General, Waterborne TP, said: *“The Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the Szczecin declaration, placing technology leadership at the core of the upcoming industrial maritime strategy. 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, eliminating all harmful pollutants, improving working conditions and create new jobs, and stimulating economic prosperity. The current Co-Programmed Partnership on Zero-emission Waterborne Transport offers a unique stepping stone towards achieving the objectives outlined in the declaration, delivering tangible results that are scalable at European level also in the long term. The call by the EU Member States to build upon existing research and innovation instruments available for the maritime industry at European level is very timely, taking into account the discussions about the future budget of the EU, including its research and innovation programme and the partnership implementing this programme.”*



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