



German waterborne sector plays a key role enabling the transition towards a resilient, competitive, and sustainable waterborne sector

Waterborne Technology Platform met with representatives of the German waterborne sector to discuss RD&I building blocks ensuring future success

Brussels, 22 September 2025

The Waterborne Technology Platform (TP) and the German representatives of the waterborne sector met in Hamburg at the premises of the German Maritime Centre on 17 September 2025. The discussions are of particular importance for the implementation of the [Strategic Research Agenda](#) of the Waterborne Technology Platform, which is centered around Technology Leadership in the areas of Ships & Shipping, Ports & Logistics and Blue Growth. The implementation of the Strategic Research Agenda is currently taking shape in the development of a Technology Roadmap. Some of the main conclusions of the meeting included, among others, that cooperation is key to achieve the objectives of a resilient, competitive and sustainable waterborne sector. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to upscale innovation and facilitate deployment, whilst at the same moment in time giving proper attention to innovations in an early stage, critical for long term competitiveness.

According to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, the German waterborne sector is characterised by its modern, high-tech shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers – many of which are well-positioned in the global markets –, globally leading waterborne transport companies – particularly container shipping companies –, high-performance port and logistics industries, innovative marine engineering industry, and renowned maritime research and training facilities. Estimates place the annual turnover of the sector at up to €50 billion, with up to 400,000 direct and indirect jobs. This makes it one of the most significant sectors of the German economy.

Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General, Waterborne TP, said: *“Our meeting with the representatives of the German waterborne sector provided insights into the opportunities and challenges of this important waterborne nation. A coordinated and joint approach regarding research, development, innovation and its deployment is seen as critical in the transition to a competitive, resilient and sustainable waterborne sector. Furthermore, to be able to timely retrofit and/or replace the current worldwide fleet (both inland waterway transport and maritime transport), there is likely to be a need for RD&I as regards capacity and capability building. Finally, while upscaling and deployment are key to a timely transition toward a zero-emission waterborne sector, early-stage innovations must be included in the technology roadmap to ensure golden opportunities for the longer-term future are not overlooked”.*



Reinhard Lücken, Managing Director, German Shipbuilding and Ocean Industries Association and Chair Executive Board, German Maritime Centre added: *“In view of the current and future challenges, research, development and innovation will be key to ensure the competitiveness of our sector. The renewal of the current Partnership on Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport, including the extension of its scope, will be critical in this respect. Besides the developments of zero-emission and digital technologies, their integration on board must remain a European expertise. Future focus on research, development and innovation as regards production capabilities is therefore one of the items we will focus on in the coming period “*

Philip Augener, Managing Director, Hamburg Ship Model Basin, added: *“HSVA is proud to be a member of the Waterborne Technology Platform. Thus, it was a great pleasure to welcome the delegation to our company and having the chance to give an insight in our facilities. Research, development and innovation activities spanning the entire chain from low TRL to high TRL are critical for the future of the sector. Furthermore, validating the applicability of innovations in testing facilities will provide the sector with certainty before implementing the innovation in practice. With a view to the future, research, development and innovation activities at European level are key, and we are ready to contribute”.*

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

The **German Shipbuilding and Oceans Industries Association (VSM)** represents the political and commercial interests of the German maritime industry, comprising shipyards building oceangoing and inland waterway vessels as well as marine equipment suppliers, classification societies, ship model basins and engineering consultants (<https://www.vsm.de/en>). The responsibilities of the association include providing members with specialist advisory and support services and representing their interests in public and vis-à-vis political institutions. The VSM also promotes technical and commercial development in the shipbuilding and ocean industry in Germany and abroad. The Association represents its members nationally and internationally.

The **Hamburg Ship Model Basin (HSVA)**, is a private, self-supporting, non-profit organisation providing research and consultancy services to the worldwide maritime industry. For more than a century HSVA is at the forefront of hydrodynamic research and pioneered testing technology, methods, standardisation and the development of cutting-edge numerical procedures to solve complex problems. Highly skilled staff interacts with customers to optimise products and procedures quickly with high precision. Today, the model basin offers a large range of experimental investigations covering resistance and propulsion tests, seakeeping-, manoeuvring- and cavitation experiments for ships and "anything that floats". The main facilities available at HSVA include the large hydrodynamics and cavitation tunnel (HYKAT), the large towing tank (300m x 18m x 6m) which has been updated with multi-directional wave making capabilities and the unique ice tank. Together with advanced maritime CFD applications HSVA offers a full range of hydrodynamic customer services at highest ship model basin standards.