Sustainable Transport Investment Plan as building block for technology leadership of the European waterborne sector

The Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the Sustainable Transport Investment Plan, which is key in facilitating the uptake of sustainable alternative fuels and closely connected to the upcoming industrial maritime and port strategies.

Brussels, 17 November 2025

On 05 November 2025, the European Commission published the Sustainable Transport Investment Plan (STIP), setting out a roadmap to accelerate the energy transition of aviation and waterborne transport sectors. The STIP identifies investment needs and outlines measures to make better use of existing EU financing programmes in support of the required investments. It also introduces measures to support the implementation of the facilitating regulatory framework. Finally, the STIP proposes measures to achieve greater market impact through coordination of support at national level and better international collaboration.

The European waterborne sector is a dynamic ecosystem, 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. While large enterprises play a key role in the development and innovation in the value chain, 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**. There are also distinctions between liner and bulk/tramp shipping and their respective business models, as well as between retrofitting existing vessels and building new ones. Ports are equally important, functioning as multimodal hubs that facilitate the movement of goods and passengers and support a wide range of economic activities, including shipbuilding, maintenance, logistics and energy production.

The STIP underlines the need of various solutions for different categories of ships, including an emphasis on energy-efficiency solutions. Furthermore, the STIP emphasises the role of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) as backbone of the sector and the diverging operations and fuel needs within the waterborne sector. It calls for a strategy considering the characteristics of all segments of the waterborne sector.

Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General, Waterborne TP, said: *"The Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the Sustainable Transport Investment Plan. The implementation of zero-emission technologies will only succeed, if sustainable alternative fuels are available worldwide, in sufficient quantities and at competitive prices. Our members are currently working on technology roadmaps, which will consider the different categories of ships, the differences between liner and bulk/tramp shipping, as well as the potential of retrofitting technologies and new builds. These roadmaps will provide input to, amongst others, the future research, development and innovation programme of the EU, as well as to the European Competitiveness Fund, which will be critical for deploying economically viable solutions. It is interesting to note that calls in the framework of the Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport (ZEWT) Partnership are included as flagship actions in the STIP. To be able to fulfil the measures laid down in the STIP, and to achieve the objectives of the upcoming industrial maritime and port strategies, public-*

private cooperation modes with all actors of the ecosystem are critical. In terms of research, development and innovation, it is essential to continue the co-programmed ZEWT Partnership with a clear focus on building a resilient, competitive and sustainable waterborne sector. Co-Programmed Partnerships have lean structures and are catalysts of private investments.
We are looking forward to shaping the content of Horizon Europe, the ECF and the upcoming strategies, jointly with the European Commission Services and Members States with a view to ensuring a flourishing future of the European waterborne sector."

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