



Waterborne Technology Leadership at the heart of EU's Industrial Maritime and Port Strategies

Waterborne Technology Platform warmly welcomes the recognition of the Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport Partnership as stepping stone for future public-private cooperation

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Today, the European Commission published the [Industrial Maritime Strategy and the European Ports Strategy](#). In both strategies, to strengthen the EU technological leadership, the European Commission will seek the reinforcement of public-private cooperation under the 2028 – 2034 Horizon Europe Framework Programme. This will build upon the achievements of the current Co-Programmed Partnership on Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport, to foster synergies and scale effect between decarbonisation, digitalisation, automation and circularity in the broader waterborne ecosystem. This is fully in line with the call for a dedicated Partnership on [Waterborne Technology Leadership](#), as published by the Waterborne Technology Platform at the beginning of January.

The transition to a competitive, resilient and sustainable waterborne sector requires a comprehensive, mission-driven research and innovation strategy. This strategy will enable rapid technological progress, accelerated demonstration and deployment, strengthened industrial competitiveness, and the seamless integration of innovations across vessels, ports, infrastructure and the expanding blue economy. The waterborne sector's transformation is uniquely complex: waterborne assets have long lifespans, vessels operate globally under diverse regulatory regimes, rely on specialised fuels and equipment, and depend on interoperable port and logistics systems. These characteristics make coordinated, large-scale RD&I investment indispensable to deliver climate neutrality, digital excellence, resilience, safety, security, and European technology leadership. Therefore, a Work-Programme-Based Partnership on Waterborne Technology Leadership in the context of Horizon Europe post 2027 should address the full innovation chain, from fundamental research to large-scale deployment.

Horizon Europe, the EU's successor to its current research, development and innovation programme, aims to strengthen Europe's scientific and technological foundations, enhance the circulation and uptake of knowledge, technology and innovation and mobilise public and private investments across the full research and innovation chain, from fundamental research to market commercialisation. Support to achieving the objectives of the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) can be provided by contributions to European Partnerships in the framework of Horizon Europe. European Partnerships are seen as an essential tool to deliver on industrial involvement and investment in collaborative research and innovation, and they should contribute to the specific objectives of the ECF policy windows.

Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General, Waterborne TP, said: *"The reinforcement of public-private cooperation in the context of Horizon Europe 2028 - 2034 reflects years of coordinated work led by the Waterborne Technology Platform and is a major achievement. First, it is a clear recognition of the strategic importance of the European waterborne ecosystem. Furthermore, it builds on years of bringing together a highly fragmented sector with diverging strategic ambitions. The added value of the ZEWT partnership is the alignment of agendas, resources, and efforts among sectors and businesses, including SMEs that dominate in the sector, in addition to pledges of additional resources for research, dissemination and capacity building. Finally, the leverage of the Partnership is remarkable, as for every Euro invested via Horizon Europe, the sector is investing 6 Euros. To prepare the future, we are currently drafting nine Technology Roadmaps, which will include research, development, innovation, upscaling and deployment, paving the way for public/private investments."*



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