

EU Member States call for a dedicated public-private partnership for the waterborne sector in the next MFF

The Waterborne Technology Platform warmly welcomes the Council Conclusions on the EU Industrial Maritime Strategy and the European Ports Strategy, aimed at strengthening the competitiveness, sustainability and resilience of the waterborne ecosystem.

Brussels, 09 June 2026

On 08 June, the Council of the EU adopted Council Conclusions on both the [EU Industrial Maritime Strategy](#) and the [European Ports Strategy](#). The Conclusions recognise that maintaining EU waterborne technology leadership and supporting the green and digital transition requires sustained investment, innovation and technological development, as key drivers of competitiveness and sustainability. These conclusions acknowledge the value of existing public-private partnerships and programmes, and support the continuity of the [Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport Partnership](#), of which the private side is coordinated by the Waterborne Technology Platform. At the same time, innovation funding should effectively accelerate industrial upscaling and deployment, strengthen production capacities also in the wider blue economy, whilst addressing non-technical barriers that currently limit large-scale deployment.

The Council also calls for improvements to the EU Innovation Fund to ensure broader accessibility for all shipping segments, particularly for SMEs. A more targeted approach is encouraged to reflect the specific characteristics and needs of different shipping segments, including the bulk/tramp sector.

The Conclusions align with the [Waterborne Technology Leadership](#) document, published at the beginning of January 2026. The waterborne sector's green and digital transformation is uniquely complex: 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 require coordinated, large-scale RD&I investment to deliver climate neutrality, digital excellence, resilience, safety, security, by means of European technology leadership. Therefore, a dedicated 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.

Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General of the Waterborne TP, said: *"The Council Conclusions send a very clear and strong signal: Europe recognises that achieving the objectives of the Industrial Maritime Strategy and the European Ports Strategy requires sustained investment in innovation. A dedicated public-private Partnership on Waterborne Technology Leadership for the waterborne sector beyond 2027 will be essential to bring together public and private resources, accelerate deployment and maintain Europe's Technology Leadership. The Waterborne Technology Platform is currently developing nine Technology Roadmaps to support these ambitions. These Technology Roadmaps span from research, development and innovation to upscaling and deployment, for the following segments: maritime technology sector, port ecosystems, inland waterway transport, short sea shipping, ferries, cruise ships, oceangoing ships, offshore vessels and blue economy. Soon, open consultations on the content of these roadmaps will be launched, to ensure stakeholder involvement as widely as possible."*



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