

The European Union is paving the way for pooling private and public resources for the European waterborne sector

The Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the progress made towards the European Competitiveness Fund and the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee, providing clarity on future investments in the waterborne sector.

Brussels, 26 June 2026

On 16 June, the Council of the EU reached a [partial general approach](#) on the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), marking an important step in shaping this key instrument. For the European waterborne sector, the Council's position remains largely aligned with the proposal of the European Commission. The ECF will invest in decarbonising the waterborne sector by co-funding infrastructure, vessels, automation, as well as digitalisation and modernisation of ports, including their development as energy hubs. These investments will contribute directly to the objectives of the recently published Industrial Maritime Strategy and the EU Ports strategy.

On 23 June, the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change of the European Economic and Social Committee published its opinion on the Industrial Maritime Strategy, clearly indicating the need for sustained investments across the entire waterborne value chain, spanning from fundamental research and innovation through to upscaling and deployment. It also recognizes the Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport Partnership as a key instrument to align on a pathway towards a sustainable future.

The European Union intends to co-fund the entire investment journey required for the twin green and digital transition of the European waterborne sector. This includes every stage of developing and manufacturing strategic technologies, products and services in Europe, - from applied research and innovation to scale-up, industrial deployment, manufacturing and market deployment. The proposed framework also covers enabling investments in infrastructure, skills and operational support.

Parts of the ECF will be implemented through European Partnerships involving public and private stakeholders, where it represents the most effective implementation to achieve the policy objectives, notably for the market deployment activities. This approach fully reflects the call of the Waterborne Technology Platform to renew the current Partnership on zero-emission waterborne transport, including the extension of its scope, to ensure a competitive, resilient and sustainable European waterborne sector.

Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General of the Waterborne TP, said: *"The waterborne sector's green and digital transformation is uniquely complex: assets have long lifespans, vessels operate globally under diverse regulatory regimes and business models, rely on specialised fuels and equipment, and depend on interoperable port and logistics systems. Furthermore, the waterborne sector encompasses a highly diverse value chain, ranging from shipyards, equipment manufacturers, shipowners, ports, energy, infrastructure and service providers, classification societies and the broader research community. 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 is critical to pool private and public resources and ensure joint objectives are met timely. To support the establishment of such a partnership, the Waterborne Technology Platform is currently developing nine different Technology Roadmaps. Earlier this week it launched an open consultation on the first three roadmaps."*



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