

Towards a carbon-neutral and competitive EU waterborne transport sector

Council Conclusions on "EU Waterborne Transport Sector – Future Outlook"

Brussels, 09 June 2020

SEA Europe welcomes the [Council Conclusions](#)¹ entitled “*EU Waterborne Transport Sector – Future outlook: Towards a carbon-neutral, zero accidents, automated and competitive EU Waterborne Transport Sector*”, approved by the Council on 5 June 2020. These conclusions are politically very relevant as they clearly indicate the views from EU Member States towards the European Commission (policies) on the future of waterborne transport. The conclusions underline the strategic importance of the European waterborne transport sector, the need for enhanced Research, Development and Innovation to achieve the objectives laid down in the Council Conclusions as well as the need for coordinated action to safeguard EU maritime interests and collectively promote free and reciprocal access to international maritime services.

The [Strategic Research Agenda](#)² of the Waterborne Technology Platform, which is supported by SEA Europe, as launched in January 2019, offers the basis to achieve the objectives envisaged in the Council Conclusions. Firstly, this agenda highlights the need to transform waterborne transport into a zero-emission mode of transport. Secondly, it emphasizes the potential of digitalisation for waterborne transport. Thirdly, it aims at achieving zero-accidents and zero-loss of life. Finally, as the Council Conclusions, the Strategic Research Agenda of the Waterborne Technology Platform also pays attention to the competitiveness of Europe’s waterborne transport sector, including in the context of future policy making.

The [White Paper](#)³ of SEA Europe, laying down SEA Europe’s vision for 2030 and beyond, as published in 2019, stipulates the need to enhance the global competitiveness of the European waterborne transport, and the creation of a global level playing field. Without any adequate and effective policies, programmes and tools, there is a serious risk that Europe will also lose its global leadership in complex shipbuilding and (advanced) maritime equipment manufacturing.

In a first reaction, SEA Europe’s Secretary General, Christophe Tytgat, said:

“Firstly, the Council Conclusions acknowledge the strategic importance of the European waterborne transport sector, in which the European maritime technology industry plays a key role. Secondly, the Conclusions clearly show the relevance of the Strategic Research Agenda of the Waterborne Technology Platform by aligning its own objectives with those laid down in the agenda of the Waterborne Technology Platform. But I am particularly pleased to note the Council’s specific support for the candidate co-programmed [Partnership Zero-emission Waterborne Transport](#)⁴ in the framework of Horizon Europe. Thirdly, the need to create a global level playing field and to enhance Europe’s global maritime leadership is an important political signal. Without an equal level playing field, there is a risk that the European waterborne transport sector will be dominated or (partially) taken over by other continents, and that thereby Europe will not only lose its capability to deliver upon the objectives of the Green Deal, but will lose its strategic autonomy as well. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the execution of the

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http://dsms.consilium.europa.eu/952/Actions/Newsletter.aspx?messageid=44063&customerid=104562&password=enc_764B32654261653554325753_enc

2 https://www.waterborne.eu/images/pdf/190121-waterborne_sra_web_final.pdf

3

<http://www.seaeurope.eu/ClientData/181/660/346027/3660/4/Leadership%202030%20executive%20summary%20final%20version%2018.10.2019.pdf>

4 https://www.waterborne.eu/images/documents/200527_Zero-Emission_Waterborne_Transport_Proposal_Final_Version_Spread.pdf

objectives and areas of intervention as laid down in the Council starts as soon as possible, in close cooperation between the European Commission, Member States, and the broader waterborne industry”.

Background Note: *SEA Europe represents close to 100% of the European shipbuilding industry in 16 nations, encompassing the production, maintenance, repair and conversion of all types of ships and floating structures, commercial as well as naval, including the full supply chain with the various producers of maritime systems, equipment material, and services.*

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