

SEARICA Blue Economy seminar

28.1.2021

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1. **Thank the organisers** for having invited SEA Europe to present its views on the Blue Economy roadmaps and the ORE strategy.

2. **Who is SEA Europe?**

- SEA Europe is the umbrella association that represents the interests of **shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers in the EU, Norway and Turkey**.
- The sector, known as the “maritime technology sector”, consists of some **300 shipyards and more than 28.000 maritime equipment manufacturers**, together generating **an annual production value of almost €115 billion** and **creating more than 1 million jobs in Europe’s maritime regions**.
- Despite many trade barriers and severe competition distortions European shipyards were **global leadership in complex shipbuilding** before Covid-19, whilst European maritime equipment manufacturers were **global leaders in the production of maritime equipment, systems and technologies**, including complex maritime products. However, **Covid-19 has impacted Europe’s maritime technology sector more heavily than its global competitors**.

3. Europe’s shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers are not only **important for the building, maintenance and retrofitting of traditional ships or the production of maritime products for the integration onboard these ships**. More and more, European maritime technology companies concentrate – at least part of their – activities also on the Blue Economy, with the **building and maintenance of maritime structures and platforms used for offshore wind farms, aquafarms, tidal turbines or devices for grid connection**. **In fact, the development of the Blue Economy and ORE offers a major diversification opportunity for Europe’s maritime technology companies, which should be fully supported and facilitated at EU, national and regional/local level with adequate policies and financing**.

By way of example, ORE requires the building of offshore wind farms but also of highly specialised vessels. Hence, our sector is strategic for Europe’s Blue Economy because our ships and products **enable** the safe and sustainable development of a wide range of “blue economy” activities. A further development of Blue Economy therefore offers a great opportunity not only for our companies but also for their local or regional industrial value chains and the regions where they are located.

4. But to make the Blue Economy a real opportunity and success, some essential framework conditions need to be fulfilled:

- a. **Europe needs to adopt a robust and adequate trade policy** that secures the level playing field, tackles competition distortion and trade barriers and that insists on reciprocity. Such policy will be **existential** for the survival of our industry as well as for the future outlook of Europe’s Blue Economy itself.

It should not be forgotten that Europe has already lost entire ship market segments to Asia because of aggressive Asian (State-led and supported) competitive distortions. And these distortions continue to exist, have even worsened since Covid-19 and are not limited to traditional maritime activities any longer. Therefore, the time for Europe to act is now since otherwise Europe’s seas and Blue Economy will be dominated by foreign ships and foreign technology, particularly from China.

- b. The EU should enhance access to finance to facilitate viable European Blue economy projects and to support high risk investments in the sector.**
 - c. Research, development and innovation will remain key for the future of the sector and for Europe's global competitiveness. Hence RDI investments need to be boosted through the various relevant EU instruments, such as Horizon Europe.**
5. In conclusion, SEA Europe welcomes the EU's "Blue Economy Roadmap" and "Offshore Renewable Strategy" but calls upon the EU to recognise and support the "key enabling" role of shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers in making the Blue Economy, including "Offshore Renewable Energy", a success and to adopt adequate legislation and policies, not least in the field of trade, to support the global competitiveness and future of the sector and of the maritime regions where shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers are located.