

Press Release

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SEA EUROPE WELCOMES EESC'S OWN-INITIATIVE REPORT ON A MARITIME INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

On 14 December, the Plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an opinion ("own-initiative report") calling for an industrial strategy for the maritime technology sector.

This report should be read against the background of the pandemic, which hit European shipbuilding very hard, as well as in the light of recent geo-political tensions, not least the war in Ukraine. These developments forced the European Union to rethink its strategies and fundamental principles in favour of new ones, such as "strategic autonomy", "industrial alliances" and "resilience".

"If the EU is serious about its strategic autonomy, resilience, energy independence, and defence, the strategic dimension of shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers cannot be ignored any longer and must be translated into an effective maritime industrial strategy", says Christophe Tytgat, SEA Europe's Secretary General and co-Rapporteur of the EESC's Opinion.

"The EU's horizontal policies ignore the specific (global) needs and challenges of shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers and have failed to respond to longstanding unfair competitive and trade distortions from foreign nations, particularly in Asia. An effective maritime industrial strategy should therefore create a true global level playing field for shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers and enable them to fulfil their strategic role as key enabler of the EU's policy ambitions in terms of defence, climate neutral and digital waterborne transport or Blue Economy. Such sectoral strategy will have many benefits, not only for the industry itself but also for its customers (shipowners), and for Europe's defence, strategic autonomy, resilience, added value and job creation in Europe's maritime regions", continued Mr. Tytgat.

"I am very pleased that the EESC, representing the voice of civil society, has reiterated the urgent need for a maritime industrial strategy, after having made a similar pledge when evaluating LeaderSHIP 2020 in 2018. Without any justification, the European Commission ignored the EESC's advice from 2018. However, with the experiences from the pandemic and recent geo-political developments, the EU cannot be complacent any longer and needs to act, stressed Mr. Tytgat. "Or stated in the words of the EESC "if the EU fails to take urgent action and deliver and rapidly implement a dedicated maritime industrial strategy, the EU might become fully dependent on Asia for its civil and naval ships and structures and maritime and offshore equipment. This would not only be a real shame but also a significant political mistake", Mr. Tytgat quoted.

Background Note:

SEA Europe represents the European shipbuilding industry in 15 nations, encompassing the production, maintenance, repair, retrofit 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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