

Press Release

SEA EUROPE WELCOMES THE EU'S NEW INDUSTRIAL AND SME STRATEGIES

Brussels, 13 May 2020

SEA Europe – the European Shipyards' and Maritime Equipment Association – welcomes and supports the European Commission's *New Industrial Strategy for Europe* and the *SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe*, issued in March 2020.

Today, SEA Europe issued a [Position Paper](#) on both strategies, welcoming the European Commission's intention to "*provide special focus on sustainable and smart mobility industries*" and welcoming the identification of shipbuilding as one of the industries with "*the responsibility and the potential to drive the twin transitions, to support Europe's industrial competitiveness and to improve connectivity*". In this regard, SEA Europe has called upon the European Commission to make shipbuilding and maritime equipment manufacturing (known as the "maritime technology sector") a priority of the forthcoming Strategies on "*Smart and Sustainable Mobility*" and on "*Offshore Renewable Energy*".

In its position paper, SEA Europe has focused on policy areas, particularly relevant to the maritime technology sector in Europe, notably:

- **Trade and competition:** The "*White Paper on a new instrument to tackle foreign subsidies*" is an adequate tool to address the lack of any trade defence instruments in support of Europe's shipyards. In this respect, SEA Europe reiterates the need for a specific EU instrument to effectively deter foreign unfair trade practices and competitive distortions. This instrument should also tackle access of foreign, state-owned companies to procurement markets and to EU funding. It should, furthermore, apply stricter rules on the use of EU funds, based on criteria of conditionality and reciprocity, with an aim at stimulating shipbuilding-related projects in the EU.
- **Upskilling and reskilling:** SEA Europe agrees with the need to invest in life-long-learning and strongly supports the promotion of collective action of industry, Member States, social partners and other stakeholders, and calls for a new 'Pact for Skills' for the sector.
- **Intellectual Property:** SEA Europe fully supports reinforcing the fight against IPR-violations and welcomes the announcement of measures to facilitate the knowledge and management of IP for SMEs. This type of measures should especially be considered for strategic sectors with high IP complexity, like shipbuilding and maritime technology. The fight against counterfeited maritime equipment and spare parts should also be reinforced to maximise the protection of maritime safety and the environment.
- **Administrative burdens:** SEA Europe calls to make urgent progress with an EU system for mutual recognition of ship classification certificates in order to reduce administrative burdens and related certification costs for European maritime equipment companies, without compromising maritime safety.

- **Naval:** SEA Europe sees the implementation of programs, such as the European Defence Fund (EDF), as an essential element towards the development of European critical capabilities. SEA Europe also looks forward to supporting the preparation of the “*new Action Plan on synergies between civil and defence industries*” and calls upon the EU to create possibilities for cross-fertilisation between dual-use technologies.

In the words of Christophe Tytgat, Secretary General of SEA Europe “*To make the promising measures in the new Industrial and SMEs strategies effective and to tackle the actual challenges of the maritime technology industry properly, these measures need to take into account the particularities and specific needs of shipyards, maritime equipment manufacturers and technology suppliers. Therefore, SEA Europe has called upon the European Commission to have an open dialogue with the sector so as to ensure the adoption of adequate actions that can maximise the promising potential of the maritime technology industry for Europe*”.

“*In the current challenging times, Europe must do its utmost efforts to provide the maritime technology sector with effective, fast, targeted sectoral solutions aiming at safeguarding Europe’s maritime technology leadership, jobs and knowledge in Europe as well as Europe’s maritime independence*”, he added. “*Indeed, without any fast actions, the bridge with Asia’s maritime technology sector will further worsen and, ultimately, Europe will lose its remaining shipbuilding segments to Asia, with devastating knock-on effects on its entire supply chain of maritime equipment companies. The loss of the strategic maritime technology sector will make Europe entirely dependent on Asia for the building, repair, retrofitting, maintenance, conversion and equipment of civilian and navy ships, at a time that COVID-19 has clearly shown the big danger of such foreign dependence*”, Mr. Tytgat concluded.

Background Note: SEA Europe represents close to 100% of the European shipbuilding industry in 16 countries, 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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