

Press release

Defence of European shipbuilding interests: It is time to end EU complacency and act against distortions of global competition!

History reveals a clear truth: robust domestic shipbuilding is fundamental for maritime security and resilient shipping. However, despite its maritime heritage, Europe has become overly reliant on foreign shipbuilding, neglecting its own capacity.

Fierce competition and substantial subsidies from Asian countries – particularly China and South Korea – to their domestic shipyards threaten Europe's shipbuilding sector. Unfair practices have driven a significant shift of commercial shipbuilding orders to Asia, diminishing Europe's capacity and jeopardizing its naval capabilities.

Amidst geopolitical instability, Europe's dependence on foreign shipbuilding poses grave risks to its economic security and strategic autonomy. In this context, the European maritime technology industry – represented by SEA Europe – aims, by 2035, to “consolidate Europe’s global leadership in complex shipbuilding and maritime equipment manufacturing, and regain strategic ship types for the European Blue Economy”¹. This ambition is not just about reclaiming market share; it is about protecting Europe's strategic interests and preserving its economic sovereignty.

SEA Europe calls for urgent action from the EU amidst distortions of global competition.

Christophe Tytgat, Secretary-General of SEA Europe, stated: “It is time to put an end to three decades of EU complacency! Taking cues from the U.S., which has taken a firm stance against China's dominance in maritime sectors², the EU must assertively defend its maritime industrial interests. The European Commission must send a strong message to Asia, signalling zero tolerance for market distortions harming Europe's shipbuilding industry.”

In particular, SEA Europe call on the European Commission to:

1. Gather information on foreign policies and subsidies supporting shipbuilding, to document evidence of distortions of global competition, for example along the existing report on state-induced distortions in China’s economy³.
2. Lead efforts to revitalize international negotiations for fair competition in shipbuilding, exploring suitable options and fora for engagement.

¹ Cf. [Setting Sail to Build in Europe 10,000 Sustainable and Digitalised Vessels by 2035 – SEA Europe’s Call for a European Maritime Industrial Strategy](#) (SEA Europe, April 2024).

² In April 2024, the U.S. Trade Representative initiated a [Section 301 Investigation on “China’s acts, policies, and practices targeting the maritime, logistics, and shipbuilding sectors for dominance”](#).

³ See [here](#).

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. As an NGO observer at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), CESA represents the shipbuilding industry and its supply chain from EU Member States, Norway, and Turkey.

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