

Press release

SEA Europe applauds the Szczecin Declaration EU Member States call for an impactful EU Industrial Maritime Strategy

SEA Europe applauds the adoption of the Szczecin Declaration by 20 EU Member States, following the Informal meeting of EU and EFTA maritime ministers in Szczecin as part of the Polish Presidency of the EU Council.

The Szczecin Declaration calls for an ambitious, comprehensive, and immediate EU Industrial Maritime Strategy. This initiative is a strategic and timely effort by EU Member States ahead of the European Commission's plans to enhance the global competitiveness and resilience of European shipbuilding and maritime equipment manufacturing, particularly in light of increasing geopolitical tensions, unfair international competition, and pressing climate challenges.

SEA Europe is particularly pleased to see the Declaration's clear recognition of:

- The strategic role of shipbuilding and maritime manufacturing industry for Europe's strategic autonomy, security and defence.
- The urgent need to ensure a level-playing field with foreign competition while securing a strong positioning on new decarbonization technologies.
- The challenges of shipbuilding and maritime manufacturing industry with an ageing workforce and re-skilling needs to cope with the challenges resulting from the green and digital transitions.
- The acute distortive effects in shipbuilding from public subsidies in some third countries, whilst shipbuilding State aid was abolished in Europe in 2013.
- European shipowners' full dependence on Asia for merchant shipbuilding, which supplies 94% of global shipbuilding and which poses an economic security risk, especially in times of increased geopolitical tensions.
- EU banking rules making European commercial banks risk averse and pushing them out of ship financing, with a negative impact on maritime investments in Europe.
- The need to support the long-term global competitiveness of the European shipbuilding and maritime manufacturing industry in world markets, in the face of increasing international competition, geopolitical tensions and trade protectionism.

"The Szczecin Declaration is a pivotal moment for Europe's maritime industries, especially for the maritime manufacturing industry, which has been lacking political support and impactful measures for far too long, despite unfair competition from Asia. Europe must protect its maritime industrial base and cannot do without commercial shipbuilding if it wants to secure its naval capabilities, cross-fertilization between commercial and naval industry, and sovereignty", said Alberto Maestrini, SEA Europe's chairman.

"The Szczecin Declaration sends a clear political message to the European Commission ahead of the preparation of the Industrial Maritime Strategy, which Commission President von der Leyen made a clear task for Transport Commissioner Tzitzikostas. If Europe wants to regain global leadership in strategic maritime segments and invest in its people, innovative technology, whilst safeguarding economic security and strategic autonomy, it needs to come up with a strong and impactful EU Industrial Maritime Strategy", said Christophe Tytgat, SEA Europe's Secretary General.

"I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the leadership of the Polish EU Presidency in achieving the Szczecin Declaration. SEA Europe is prepared to assist the European Commission in its efforts to establish the industrial maritime strategy," stated Mr. Maestrini.

"To have an impactful industrial maritime strategy, a close dialogue between maritime stakeholders and European Commission services is key.", concluded Mr. Tytgat.

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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