21 OCTOBER 2026

Press release

Vision 2040 for EU fisheries and aquaculture: SEA Europe deeply regrets European Commission's lack of ambition and failure to unblock energy transition

SEA Europe, the association of European shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers, profoundly regrets the lack of ambition in the European Commission 2040 vision for fisheries and aquaculture and its accompanying energy transition roadmap, issued yesterday. Despite two years of constructive involvement in the EU Energy Transition Partnership, SEA Europe must conclude that there are no concrete measures to address the regulatory bottlenecks this partnership had identified.

It goes without saying that the energy transition of fisheries and aquaculture will simply not happen without two key changes, both falling within the European Commission's remit.

First, the European Commission must revise rules that prevent increases in vessel volume. These restrictions hinder the shift to greener propulsion systems, which inherently require more onboard space. Vessel volume is an outdated measure of fishing capacity: it restricts design and does not reflect catch capacity.

Second, key financing frameworks remain effectively closed. Despite a limited amendment to the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, most of the required investment remains ineligible for EU and national public support. Without broader reform, the framework fails to provide the certainty needed to reassure and attract private investors.

Vincent Guerre, Deputy Secretary General of SEA Europe and Coordinator for the shipbuilding industry in the Energy Transition Partnership, stated:

"The European Commission is completely inconsistent on fisheries. On the one hand, its new EU Industrial Maritime Strategy has identified fisheries amongst the lead markets for Europe's maritime industry. On the other hand, it refuses to address longstanding and therefore well-known regulatory and financial barriers that have so far prevented a modernisation and renewal of Europe's fishing fleet. SEA Europe calls on the European Commission to align its fisheries policy with its renewed industrial ambition."

"We will continue to promote the business case for efficient and sustainable fishing vessels through the new EU Industrial Maritime Value Chains Alliance," said Mr. Guerre. "We thereby invite the European fishing sector to join forces with us to turn this industrial ambition into concrete action," he concluded.

Background Note:

SEA Europe represents close to 100% of the European shipbuilding industry in 17 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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