

Waterborne

Activities' Report - Year 2024

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1. Introduction

Waterborne is the technological platform for waterborne transport, created to establish a permanent dialogue between the European Commission, Member States and all stakeholders in the sector: shipyards, shipowners, infrastructure and service providers, associations, universities and research institutes. Waterborne has more than 100 members, including those from marine-related technology sectors other than transport (e.g. marine renewable energy). In 2021, Waterborne signed a MoU with the European Commission for the implementation of the Horizon Europe Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport (ZEWT) co-programmed partnership, which mobilises €530 million and for which Waterborne has produced the strategic agenda on which calls are based. To define the research, development and innovation topics, the Industrial Research Advisory Groups (IRAGs) Ships&Shipping, Blue Growth and Ports&Logistics were set up.

2. Main activities carried on by (Union name) during 2024 relevant for Italy and for CNR

The Waterborne technology platform is therefore tasked with defining the most effective research, development and innovation trajectories for the waterway transport sector to contribute to the achievement of European objectives in terms of environmental sustainability, digital transition and competitiveness of national industries. Waterborne also provides support for European and global challenges relating to the protection of seas and oceans through permanent dialogue and collaboration with partnerships and initiatives such as the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (SBEP), coordinated by Italy, and the Mission Restore our Oceans and Waters. Through its Liaison Officers, Waterborne gathers information and establishes synergies with thematically related partnerships such as Clean Hydrogen and Batt4EU.

Waterborne is therefore the European reference organization for the maritime transport sector, for which it defines the strategies needed to guide Italy's research and innovation in one of the sectors of greatest importance to the country's economy.

3. Activities carried on by (Italian Delegate name) within the Union during 2024 and impact on the Italian scientific community

In addition to participating in meetings of the General Assembly and the Alignment Group, which is the technical coordination and planning structure for the platform's activities, the main actions carried out in 2024 were: the proposal and the scientific and logistical organization of a joint Waterborne-SBEP workshop and the participation in the drafting of the 2026-2027 calls for Horizon Europe-Cluster 5-ZEWT. To monitor the activities on all topics of interest, CNR representatives were appointed to participate in technical and writing groups.

4. Evaluation of the participation in terms of benefits and membership cost

In addition to what has already been described above, participation in Waterborne allows the CNR to be part of a large network of stakeholders in the marine-maritime sector, which is essential for enabling the scientific research sector to have a stronger role and to obtain funding. In this regard, Waterborne organises Brokerage Events exclusively for members to encourage the establishment of consortia that can successfully apply for calls of interest. Another important aspect is the consolidation of relations between the CNR and the national industry, which is widely represented within Waterborne. The link created between Italian research and industry makes it possible to represent national needs and interests more effectively at European level, with important repercussions for the country.

5. Italian experts with important roles within the Union or within related Commissions and Programs (if known)

- Emilio Fortunato Campana Vice-Chair of the IRAG Blue Growth (formerly Chair) and member of the Alignment Group
- Cecilia Leotardi (CNR-INM) member of the Board of the Zero Emission Waterborne Transport Partnership since June 2023
- Elena Ciappi (CNR-INM) Liaison Officer between Waterborne TP and Mission Restore Our Oceans and Waters since March 2023 and member of the Alignment Group

6. Conclusions

The work carried out as part of its participation in the Waterborne technology platform has enabled the CNR to take part in defining strategic research areas for the waterway transport sector, to participate in drafting calls for proposals and to establish solid collaborative relationships with players in the sector for the creation of consortia that have applied to the calls with a significant success rate. More generally, the CNR's participation allows its researchers to be present at technical meetings on all issues concerning maritime transport, which is essential for promoting the results of research already obtained, guiding future research and continuing to obtain funding. Participation in Waterborne also allows for the establishment of strong partnerships with leading national industries, with important repercussions for the country.

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