



Brussels, July 22nd 2025



Response to the European Commission's Call for Evidence on an EU Maritime Industrial Strategy

The European Council for Maritime Applied Research (ECMAR) welcomes the European Commission's Call for Evidence on an EU Industrial Maritime Strategy and recognises the need for a more coordinated approach to set ambitious policy objectives.

The European maritime industry is at a pivotal time in history, where strategic planning and investment in Research and Innovation are crucial for maintaining its technological leadership and increasing global competitiveness. Therefore, As, a leading voice for maritime applied research in Europe, ECMAR advocates for a strategic, integrated approach to research and innovation.

ECMAR urges the consideration of key issues raised by its members, which are essential for shaping the next EU budget and framework programmes. These insights coming from active R&D stakeholders are critical to ensure that future framework programmes (FP10 in particular) effectively address the challenges and opportunities within the maritime research landscape.

1. Prioritizing Low to Medium Technology Readiness Level (TRL) Projects for Industrial Advancement in the next EU Research Programme (FP10)

- Current EU funding instruments do not sufficiently address low Technology Readiness Level (TRL) projects in maritime transport.
- There's a lack of funding for basic research (TRL 1-3) and early technology development (TRL 3-5) in maritime technologies. While some support exists via Horizon Europe's Research and Innovation Actions and EIC Pathfinder, it is very limited.
- Current funding instruments heavily favour projects demonstrating existing technologies (TRL 6-8). This creates a gap between fundamental research and practical applications.



- Insufficient low-TRL funding hinders the development of disruptive and innovative maritime technologies, negatively affects the European competitiveness, and increases its dependence on non-European technology developers.

ECMAR emphasizes the following aspects:

- The essential role of research in preparing the technological basis for successful innovation in industry, The need to support the entire R&I chain, and not to fill the “Innovation Valley of Death” at high TRL by reducing research on medium TRL
- The importance of not only developing new technologies (low TRL) but also bringing promising ones to higher TRL levels for practical implementation. Extensive field testing and further development are essential for promising low-TRL green technologies, particularly alternative fuels and propulsion systems, while funding for high-TRL projects should consider both operational costs (OPEX) and capital costs (depreciation) to maintain financial viability
- In Horizon Europe Research programme, maritime sector is almost exclusively present through Cluster 5, section Transport, this is a limitation in term of budget and number of low to medium TRL projects.

Recommendation 1: Thus, the Industrial Maritime Strategy should support both low and high Technology Readiness Level (TRL) projects in a harmonized manner, thereby mitigating the lack for funding and coordination currently encountered by medium TRL projects.

Recommendation 2: Thus, in order to support both low and high Technology Readiness Level projects in a harmonized manner, and increase the potential of maritime funded projects, **maritime sector must be mainstreamed inside research programmes, with more topics flagged to the maritime sector.** This is especially true for topics coming from other clusters or pillars which are more research or technology oriented such as “Cluster 4: Digital, Industry and Space” and pillar I Excellent Science which should incorporate more topics related to the maritime sector.

Recommendation 3: Projects with extremely high TRL (>7) should primarily seek funding from **dedicated programs** such as the Innovation Fund, Ten-T, LIFE, and Interreg. This will prevent them from competing for and potentially jeopardizing funding from EU research programs (e.g., Horizon Europe/FP10) that are better suited for earlier-stage research and development. **Improved coordination between next EU Research programme (FP10) and these dedicated programs** is crucial to ensure efficient allocation of resources and avoid duplication of efforts.



2. Balanced Budget between 2050 climate neutral objectives and other objectives and more budget for high quality proposals

- Current EU funding instruments heavily support maritime projects that are related 2050 climate neutral objectives through Zero Emissions Waterborne Transport Partnership, thus preventing research in other maritime fields such as **autonomous shipping, ships safety, ships digitalisation, materials & circular economy, polar navigation** to name a few.
- **ECMAR welcomes current discussions about the launch of a Co-Programmed Partnership on Digitalisation of Waterborne transport which will integrate wider objectives than 2050 climate neutral objectives and CO2 reduction.**
- Many high-quality proposals that passed the threshold are not funded due to lack of fundings, which reduces the innovation potential of the maritime sector.

Recommendation 4: Increasing the budget for maritime research, especially in areas not covered by the Clean Power for Transport (CPT) Directive, nor by the current SRIA of the ZEWT co-Programmed Partnership is imperative.

Recommendation 5: Increasing fundings capacity or proposing alternative fundings sources for high quality proposals will liberate the innovation potential for the maritime sector.

3. Prioritizing deployment of projects that mitigate cost due to green transition

- Current EU funding instruments have been heavily supporting green transition via technologies or adoption of alternative fuels which will contribute to increase the cost of maritime transport.
- ECMAR's vision for economically viable green technologies aims to mitigate inflationary pressures due to the cost of green transition, while advancing towards a decarbonized and competitive maritime sector.
- This vision strongly supports the development of **energy-efficient solutions (novel ship designs, hull design, reduction water friction, onboard solutions...)** and operations that leverage new technologies to reduce energy consumption and renewable energy sources such as wind for a sustainable marine and maritime economy.

Recommendation 6: ECMAR recommends adopting technologies that will reduce or limit the cost of green transition for the benefit of EU citizen, more particularly Energy Efficient designs / solutions and renewable energy sources such as wind for ship propulsion.



More Information about ECMAR:

Scope of ECMAR:

ECMAR contributes to shaping a strategic research and innovation agenda for the European maritime sector, with a focus on aligning priorities with EU Framework Programmes. The association works closely with research organisations, universities, and industry to advance R&D in areas such as sustainable ship design, digitalisation, decarbonisation, and advanced maritime technologies. Its activities span waterborne transport, offshore renewables, autonomous systems, and maritime safety, contributing to the competitiveness and resilience of the European Blue Economy.

Membership:

ECMAR's membership offers a research-driven, technically grounded perspective to complement broader industrial strategies. It includes research-performing organisations active in applied maritime R&D, primarily from within the EU, candidate countries, and the European Economic Area. ECMAR brings together a focused group of 24 research-performing organisations — including public and private research centres and innovation-oriented SMEs — active in applied maritime R&D across 14 European countries. Members are engaged in collaborative EU projects and contribute with advanced technical expertise across a wide range of maritime domains.

ECMAR's Maritime Strategic Research Agenda:

This document outlines the technology challenges and opportunities facing the European maritime transport sector up to 2030 and beyond. It provides recommendations for future research and innovation (R&I) priorities, particularly for FP10 (2028-2034).

Full document accessible via this link: <https://ecmar.systeme.io/sra>