

PRESS RELEASE

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SETTING SAIL TO BUILD IN EUROPE 10,000 SUSTAINABLE AND DIGITALISED VESSELS BY 2035:

SEA EUROPE'S CALL FOR A EUROPEAN MARITIME INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Today, SEA Europe, the association representing the European maritime technology industry, comprising shipyards and maritime equipment manufacturers, has issued a resounding call to action to European policymakers. SEA Europe is urging them to formulate a comprehensive European Maritime Industrial Strategy.

The maritime technology industry is pivotal for Europe's strategic independence. It builds, equips and maintains vessels and platforms crucial for transporting goods, people, and energy, connecting maritime regions, and bolstering the Blue Economy. Furthermore, it provides naval capabilities essential for Europe's defence and security.

Despite its strategic role, the European maritime technology industry has faced considerable challenges over the past years, particularly due to longstanding competition distortions from Asia. Consequently, Europe has experienced a significant erosion in its merchant and offshore shipbuilding. This decline has not only jeopardized the industrial capacity of European shipyards but also undermined the entire supply chain ecosystem encompassing equipment, systems, and technologies, and harmed naval shipbuilding capabilities.

Because of substantial price differentials of 30% to 40%, combined with advantageous financial incentives – especially offered by Chinese banks –, European shipowners have increasingly opted for Asian shipbuilders. As a result, European shipyards have seen a significant decline in orders. This trend not only poses a substantial economic risk but also undermines Europe's strategic autonomy, particularly amidst current geopolitical tensions.

Christophe Tytgat, Secretary-General of SEA Europe, underscored the urgency of the situation: ***"It is imperative to regain Europe's shipbuilding capacity by securing orders from shipowners, including European shipowners. The transition towards sustainability and digitalisation within waterborne transport and the Blue Economy is a promising opportunity for Europe to surpass global competitors in quality, efficiency, and safety. Our ambition is clear: by 2035, we aim to supply 10,000 sustainable and digitalised vessels to strategic sectors of the European Blue Economy."***

Christophe Tytgat emphasized the critical need for EU policymakers to enact a Maritime Industrial Strategy as a matter of priority for Europe's strategic autonomy: ***"We call upon EU policymakers to urgently put in place a Maritime Industrial Strategy to support the business cases of the European maritime technology industry. This strategy should bolster technological leadership, facilitate investments, and nurture a skilled workforce. By strengthening its shipbuilding capacity amidst a challenging global landscape, Europe will enhance its economic security and strategic autonomy in the maritime domain, which is much needed in a context of geopolitical tensions."***

SEA Europe will present its policy recommendations at the European Parliament on April 17th, during an event co-hosted by MEP Catherine Chabaud and MEP Pierre Karleskind.

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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