

**Opening Address Clara de la Torre**

**Waterborne Research Conference: Competitive, Safe and Sustainable**

**8 June 2017, 9h:30**

**Madou Tower Auditorium**

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

On behalf of the Commission, I am pleased to welcome you to our first Horizon 2020 research conference supporting competitive, safe and sustainable waterborne transport.

Today is remarkable since it is "World Oceans Day" and this is one of a range events taking place across the globe on the theme "Our Oceans, Our Future".

As we go about our daily lives, we can easily forget our dependency on the seas which drive our weather, house amazing ecosystems and which throughout history have carried trade to support economic growth.

We must remind ourselves that some 90% of all products, almost everything around us has been carried on a ship.

Now we are realising our responsibility to ensure that the seas are healthy for future generations. Once they were seen as limitless, covering 2/3 of the planet and so huge that human activity could have no effect.

Now we know that this is not true. Plastic garbage is everywhere, even in the deepest depths or remotest beaches. Sea levels are rising and climate change means that sea trade now takes place within remotest arctic regions.

Our responsibility is indeed unique to ensure "Our future" through sustainable development of "Our Oceans"

This reflects the United Nations millennium development goal 14 (*Conserve and Sustainably Use Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development*) and all actors within the marine environment have a role to play, including shipping.

Waterborne transport is potentially the most greenhouse gas efficient, safest and competitive transport mode. Although this cannot be assured and the sector faces notable challenges.

Comparing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of shipping at around 14g per ton/km with road freight at around 75g per ton/km<sup>1</sup>, a fully laden ship is today, overwhelmingly the most carbon efficient freight transport mode. However the case is less clear when not fully loaded

Ships also cause significant SOX, NOX and particulate pollution. Within coastal and port areas shipping can be the largest source of air pollution.

Cruise ships are an important business for Europe: they operate in the most sensitive regions of the world where there are usually high environmental expectations. Yet, due to pollution concerns these ships are sometimes welcomed in ports by demonstrations from environmental protestors.

We need to be ambitious and aim for zero emission. We must decarbonise and reduce pollution.

This is possible! Indeed, solutions are on the horizon such as battery electric and fuel cell ships and even reverting to wind as an additional source of power. Battery ships are already deployed on shorter ferry routes and fuel cell auxiliary power is now being demonstrated at sea. Large scale adoption at high power for extended range is still an ambition and needs R&I before it is ready for the market. Likely within 10 years, and this is not long considering the 20 year lifetime of a typical ship.

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<sup>1</sup> European Environment Agency 2011 data. <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/specific-co2-emissions-per-tonne-2>

Shorter term improvements can also be achieved by addressing the environmental performance of the existing fleet. Efficiency improvements, exhaust treatment systems and cleaner fuels all have a role to play. These are starting to be deployed and R&I can improve their effectiveness and speed up deployment.

It is important to recall that waterborne transport is amongst the safest form of transport and pollution following marine accidents has been dramatically reduced. Rules changed after the 1999 Erika and the 2002 Prestige oil tanker disasters.

Also the Costa Concordia disaster and other passenger ship accidents around the world remind us that we cannot be complacent and that the potential for a tragic accident remains.

Europe is the builder of the most advanced and largest passenger ships and has therefore a key role to ensure the safety of passenger shipping, both technically and through regulation. R&I undertaken, in cooperation with international partners, plays an important role in this respect.

For example, evacuating thousands of passengers safely at sea remains a serious challenge. This was illustrated by the Costa Concordia disaster: if it had not been close to the shore with calm weather conditions the tragedy would have been huge. To overcome this risk, the Commission intends to target research towards a radical rethink of how to safely evacuate such large ships within all conditions.

Europe's Marine industries have focused on advanced high added value, high technology products and this strategy has enabled European business to remain competitive during the global slump in marine shipping.

Europe leads as a producer of marine equipment, cruise ships and the manufacture of green shipping technology.

Connectivity and autonomous shipping is progressing rapidly and the first commercial services within national waters are expected within years.

Yet we cannot be complacent and must continue to innovate to maintain this technological lead. Our competitors are starting to construct their first cruise ships. Connected systems must be robust and "cyber secure".

Remember that the vulnerability of connected systems has been illustrated by recent experience within airline industry and widespread ransom wear cyber-attacks.

You will see from the following project presentations how Research and Innovation can address these challenges and provide really practical solutions with real impacts that directly link European policies concerning transport, climate change, air quality, safety, jobs and growth.

This strategic link between research project outcomes and policy can be overlooked when working on the details of a research project. For green shipping, we will highlight the link between FP7 and H2020 research and policy within a "*projects for policy*" report to be concluded this year. Projects are also for policy.

I must underline that we rely on your organised and active contribution to enable us to formulate and structure future research and innovation programmes.

I also encourage you to engage with the waterborne technology platform which is the prime body for providing organised and strategic advice on waterborne research.

Now together with Member States, we are finalising the contents of the last work programme of Horizon 2020 for the years 2018-20. This has been founded also on your input, notably from the Waterborne Platform.

Being organised and coming together as a coherent sector through the technology platform enables you to have a stronger voice. As you can imagine, this is particularly important now and through next year in the context of the initial discussions concerning a successor to Horizon 2020.

As well as coming together, I encourage you to communicate effectively at an appropriate level and that, as a community, you

can provide clear vision which coincides with important large scale public challenges such as zero emission transport.

You need to clearly show the added value from your sector and make clear those achievements that have been made possible through European investment in Research and Innovation.

Many times, I am disappointed to be informed of websites and press releases which prominently display organisational logos but make no mention of the underlying European support. Dissemination and showing the value of Horizon 2020 projects is important for the future of your sector and of Europe.

As you may be aware the next Transport Research Arena, TRA conference takes place in Vienna from the 16<sup>th</sup> of April next year<sup>2</sup>. Co organised by the Commission, TRA attracts more than 3000 delegates from all transport modes. I hope that you will participate and ensure that there is strong waterborne presence that can show its achievements towards a broad transport audience.

Finally, I would like to thank you for joining us and I hope that today's presentations, contacts and exchanges will be very valuable for all of you.

Although, I must leave in the coffee break I wish you success and look forward to feed back within the coming days.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> TRA 2018: 16-19 April 2018