



European naval shipbuilders join forces to ensure security of the EU

Vlissingen, 24 May 2023 – Naval shipbuilders, research institutes and the naval supply chain from eight European countries have proposed to continue working together on developing the best naval ships of the future. For the past 30 months, many of the leading European players in naval technology, design, and shipbuilding have carried out a comprehensive European-wide feasibility study to see in which areas they can join forces and develop the best next-generation naval platforms. This initial SEA Defence project is now coming to a close, but the cooperation will continue, vows SEA Defence Coordinator Peter van Terwisga, who is also the Director European Naval R&D Affairs at Damen Naval.

“With war raging in Eastern Europe, it is paramount that the European naval defence industry works together to ensure the security of the European Union on its shores and overseas,” he states. “EU Member States need to guarantee that their future naval fleet will remain at the technological forefront to be able to defend themselves against all possible threats. And rather than each of us trying to invent the same wheel, it makes much more sense to pool our resources on certain topics.”

The SEA Defence project is based on the conviction that cooperation at a European level is necessary to preserve the competitiveness of the European naval industry. Its ultimate aim has been to evaluate the impact of the latest and emerging technologies on the effectiveness and performance of naval capabilities while simultaneously increasing interoperability on a European scale. Simply put: to design the most advanced ships that, while different from one another, can work closely together and communicate securely and efficiently with each other.

To achieve this, the project has united twelve partners and seven Ministries of Defence from eight countries. This includes seven of Europe’s biggest naval shipbuilders: Damen Naval (The Netherlands), Fincantieri (Italy), Naval Group (France), Navantia (Spain), SAAB Kockums (Sweden), and Naval Vessels Lürssen and thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (Germany). Other stakeholders are ATLAS Elektronik, Blohm+Voss, Cetena, CTN, Fincantieri NextTech, Naviris, MARIN, OMT, SAES, Sirenha, SEA Europe, and TNO.

While the project partners have traditionally had competitive relationships with each other, SEA Defence has laid a cornerstone for further naval cooperation under the European Defence Fund (EDF). The partners have met at various workshops to discuss topics such as new energy solutions, integrated vessel management, the development of unmanned technology, and a ‘system of systems’ fleet that will allow vessels from various nations to share intelligence, data and more.

The main findings and recommendations for innovations were presented to stakeholders, partners, and interested parties during a special final event in Amsterdam on 23 and 24 May.

“Several new EDF-projects have already sprouted from our cooperation during SEA Defence, and it is incredibly gratifying to know other projects will follow,” says Mr Van Terwisga. “We have identified seven overarching roadmaps which pave the way to European naval superiority in this rapidly changing geopolitical environment. These roadmaps will be used by the industry and Member States to define collaborative European Research, Development, and Innovation activities for the coming years.”

SEA Defence is a Research and Development initiative of SEA Naval, the permanent working group of shipyard integrators of SEA Europe. SEA Naval represents the industry platform for the implementation of current and future naval defence programs.



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