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Climate protection and innovation: Europe a laboratory for the future of maritime shipping

EU Transport Ministers' Conference in Hamburg / VDR: "Reflects high priority of maritime shipping" / German shipowners emphasise necessity of worldwide CO₂ targets

On Tuesday, within the scope of Germany's EU Council presidency the EU transport ministers will discuss concrete measures in favour of climate-friendly and innovative maritime shipping in Hamburg. Germany's Federal Transport Minister Andreas Scheuer, the host of this high-calibre meeting, expects not only fellow-ministers and key industry representatives but also EU Transport Commissioner Adina Vălean to attend the conference.

Alfred Hartmann, President of the German Shipowners' Association (Verband Deutscher Reeder - VDR), who will be attending this event along with Hapag-Lloyd CEO Rolf Habben Jansen, welcomed the initiative of the federal government: "Unfortunately, numerous events planned under Germany's presidency of the EU Council were cancelled due to the pandemic. The fact that the federal transport minister has arranged this conference in Hamburg nevertheless shows the high status that maritime shipping quite rightly enjoys."

Hartmann said that maritime shipping was one of the mainstays of Europe's economy, adding that roughly ninety percent of external and forty percent of internal EU merchandise trade was handled by sea. He indicated that European shipping companies controlled 40 percent of the global merchant fleet, contributing about 150 billion euros per annum to EU GDP and offering 2.1 million Europeans forward-looking jobs, both onshore and offshore.

The VDR President emphasised the immense importance of constructive dialogue between policymakers in Europe and industry on the subject of climate protection: "For German maritime shipping, for some time now there has been a lot more at stake than the question as to whether this industry segment is part of a decarbonisation drive; even more important is to find the best way of making sea transport more climate-friendly as fast and as comprehensively as possible," said Hartmann. He added: "The challenge for the shipping industry and the international community is to reduce CO₂ emissions without simultaneously restricting the capacity needed in maritime trade. We want to make an active and constructive contribution in this regard."



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Against this backdrop, the German Shipowners' Association believes that while the implementation of the European Commission's 'Green Deal' will be a challenge to the maritime sector in the coming years, this will simultaneously be an opportunity: "The Green Deal should enable Europe to become a laboratory for climate-neutral shipping. New, climate-neutral fuels for ocean-going vessels are of decisive importance. The EU will be at the forefront of innovation if pressure is exerted on developing and making these fuels ready for application and marketable here."

In this context, Hartmann once again emphasised the significance of global CO₂ targets, saying: "We should jointly commit ourselves to calling for urgent introduction of worldwide climate rules and regulations: Climate protection must not become a disguise behind which merely new taxes are invented for the purpose of stabilising budgets. Regional arrangements ultimately do not provide adequate help for the climate; instead, they adversely affect industry on the continent in fierce global competition."

The VDR President finally warned: "Time is tight. We need solutions soon to create the objectives for the IMO that we have jointly set ourselves. We now need make a concerted effort to change the course on which we are headed."

About the German Shipowners' Association

The German Shipowners' Association (Verband Deutscher Reeder, VDR) is responsible for representing the common business and social policy interests of German shipping companies at federal and state government level as well as in relation to European and international bodies. The VDR was established in 1907, and in 1994 it merged with the Association of German Coastal Shipowners. With a membership of around 200, the VDR represents the majority of Germany's merchant fleet. Further particulars are available at www.reederverband.de.

Press photos of Alfred Hartmann: <https://www.reederverband.de/presse/pressefotos.html>

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