

Our Programme (March 2022)

Deutsches Maritimes Zentrum German Maritime Centre

We strengthen Germany's maritime industries

The German Maritime Centre is a cross-sector think tank. Our aim is to expand and foster nationwide interdisciplinary exchange within the maritime sector, and with other industries, policy makers, the scientific community and public authorities.

Members include Germany's federal government (its main source of funding), five federal states and the country's leading maritime associations. With the founding of the German Maritime Centre, its members have created an independent institution which promotes maritime industries—one of Germany's core business sectors.

Background

A stable and highly productive European maritime sector and efficient industry-specific service providers are essential for economic success, employment and sustainability. They ensure the environmentally safe, reliable and cost-effective transport of goods and people between countries and continents.

A complex and broadly diversified value chain and world-leading expertise in maritime systems make shipbuilding and marine technology key industries for all of Germany. Maintaining and boosting this industrial sector is of vital geostrategic importance.

Germany is one of the world's leading shipping nations in terms of container vessels, specialised shipping, bulk carriers and tankers, and in the application of maritime safety and environmental protection systems.

Germany's seaports are among the world's most efficient transshipment hubs. Two-thirds of the country's seaward trade and a significant portion of Europe's foreign trade move through them. German port management companies operate terminals and logistics facilities in many other countries, and they market port technology and know-how around the world. Their willingness to innovate and invest heavily makes Germany a global leader in port technology.

The German Bundestag provided funding to set up the German Maritime Centre in 2016. Its objective is to increase the competitive edge and innovative capacity of Germany's entire maritime economy, foster expertise and bolster job prospects.¹

¹ See the decision of the German Bundestag Budget Committee of 10.11.2016 and Section 2(1) of the Articles of Association of the German Maritime Centre.

The German Maritime Centre was founded on 19 July 2017. It is a not-for-profit association and has no political or religious affiliations. The association does not engage in any kind of commercial or business activities.² It is explicit that the activities of the association are not designed to provide individual companies with individualised services.

Funding “to complete setting up the Centre until it begins operations” comes from the budget of the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure³ (since December 2021: Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport), and is financed to a lesser extent by membership fees. The aim of the Centre is to provide the maritime sector with coordinated support in research, development and innovation. This also includes cross-industrial monitoring of all aspects of the maritime sector.

Positioning

As a platform and think tank, we will do our part to boost the innovative capacity of Germany’s maritime sector.

Our activities span all value chains in the fields of shipbuilding and marine technology as well as shipping, ports and maritime logistics.

We provide maritime stakeholders with comprehensive information and in-depth studies on relevant developments in the market, in technology, and on legal and policy developments, creating added value for the entire sector.

We identify future issues facing the maritime sector and help to develop solutions. In doing so, we learn from outcomes in other sectors and build on the transfer of experience.

We follow and analyse international market trends and the development of technologies and conditions in the maritime sector.

We coordinate research, development and innovation activities to enable the German maritime economy and research community to benefit even more from national and European development programmes. We carry out conceptual groundwork to support the development of national research strategies and the shaping of practice-oriented funding instruments tailored to the sector.

We commission studies, and by making findings available, we do our share to increase knowledge and advance the state of technology in the maritime sector. We launch initiatives and projects which promote the transfer of knowledge and expertise to the political arena, the scientific community and civil society.

² See the administrative regulations (VV) of the Federal Budget Code (BHO), No 1.1 of Section 65 of the Federal Budget Code.

³ The grant approval notification of 22 June 2020 is designated as “Federal funding to complete setting up the German Maritime Centre until it begins operations”.

We support the introduction of innovative technologies in the maritime sector by sharing new technological findings with the national and international bodies responsible for drafting regulatory and standardisation policy.

Together with our members, we aim to train qualified young people and attract career changers. We promote jobs and careers in the maritime sector.

Fields of activity

The maritime sector is experiencing a period of major change. Competition on the world market has changed considerably over the past ten years. The sector must deal with political, economic and social changes and challenges in order to continue its development with a secure future.

Climate change has a direct impact on shipping routes and infrastructure, at sea and on land. Changing sea levels and an increase in extreme weather events demand considerable investment in coastal protection, port access channels and port facilities.

Germany's maritime sector can maintain and consolidate its position on the market by developing and implementing new technologies. Research findings must be put into practice much more quickly to achieve this objective.

Demographic change and new technologies and processes mean that the training, qualifications and working methods required of employees in the maritime sector are also changing, often due to increased automation.

Our cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach enables us to comprehensively address these challenges, which are linked to each other in many ways.

Competitiveness

We identify and analyse those regulatory policies, productivity factors and cost structures that lead to distorted competition at the international level. We develop proposals for standardising and simplifying planning and procurement procedures.

We want to further develop and implement national, European and international maritime standards, codes and regulations. We support the maritime sector in creating its own digital standards and expertise, and we identify opportunities to transfer and apply knowledge gained from other sectors.

The platform economy and its international players are also forging ahead into the maritime sector—in transport and logistics, and in the operation of maritime systems supported by big data and AI. This will change business models in Germany's maritime economy. We also monitor the market, keeping an eye especially on financing models that would enable industries in the German maritime sector to implement innovations.

Sustainability and climate change

For us, environmentalism and economic development go hand in hand. We contribute to the development of standards to mitigate climate change and protect the environment. Our focus is on green shipping, energy sources, propulsion systems and an efficient energy supply.

We are looking to bring together various interest groups, for example to accelerate the use of alternative fuels and propulsion systems and improve the sector's performance in sustainability.

We initiate studies as well as research and development projects that focus on the introduction of green technologies boosting the maritime economy. We lay the groundwork for the development of regulations and standards.

Technological change

We support the federal government in drafting new development programmes and guidelines, in meeting its responsibilities in the maritime sector, and in allocating European funding for research, development and innovation.

We monitor and analyse research and development activities in the maritime sector. Digitalisation, automation, new manufacturing processes (such as 3D printing), and new energy sources and storage technologies play a key role. We identify trends and initiate studies and projects in key technologies, focussing in particular on knowledge transfer and cross innovation for the entire sector.

The maritime sector benefits from the fact that we collect and process information on international, European, national and regional development programmes and make this information available, using practice-oriented instruments.

Demographics and recruitment

The maritime sector is a diverse, forward-thinking employer and offers a wide range of attractive study programmes and career opportunities. However, like other sectors, it too is facing a shortage of skilled workers. Together with our members we want to attract trainees and skilled career changers to ensure the continuity of maritime expertise. We foster the work of vocational training institutions and support cooperative relationships with social partners.

Development, working methods and outlook

We received funding from the federal government to set up the German Maritime Centre from 2018 through the end of 2020, which was allocated from the budget of the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI). The focus during those first three years was on building personnel and technical infrastructure and defining fields of activity. We are receiving additional funding from the BMVI (since December 2021: Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport/BMDV) budget from 1 January 2021 to 31 December

2023, this time to complete the setting up process until the Centre starts operations. This funding is supplemented by membership fees. As a team player, we put forward our work and findings in a transparent manner. Our operating activities make use of efficient management tools, effective forms of cooperation and valuable communication channels.

The Centre's management is responsible for administrative and technical matters in consultation with the executive board. It is also in charge of determining and implementing work on topics and fields of activity addressed by the association's various working groups.

The Centre is expected to have a staff of about 30 by the end of the set-up phase. The interdisciplinary team relies on the expertise of its members and expert communities—including those outside the maritime sector—when it decides on areas of focus and drafts project proposals. The advisory panel supports us by sharing its knowledge; it also engages in critically reviewing and discussing our projects and activities.

Cooperation with other associations as well as institutions at state and federal levels, industry representatives and research institutes is crucial to our work. We want to recruit more members to advance cross-institutional dialogue between all of Germany's maritime stakeholders.

We present our working methods and findings at specialist conferences to reach policy makers, industry stakeholders and scientific researchers.