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SMM

Press Release · Pressemitteilung

Latest SMM survey: Maritime industry looks to the future with optimism

78 per cent of exhibitors expect their business performance to improve. Energy efficiency is the most important issue for the future, followed by maritime security and AI.

Hamburg, 26 November 2026 – The maritime industry is looking to the future with confidence. This is the finding of a recent survey of around 1,500 visitors and 1,500 exhibitors at SMM 2026. **90 per cent of the exhibitors surveyed** expect the economic situation in their industry to improve or remain stable over the next two years. Visitors also take a largely positive view of the industry's prospects: **87 per cent** expect the situation to improve or remain stable. Exhibitors are even more optimistic about the prospects for their own companies: **78 per cent expect their business performance to improve** over the next two years. Their expectations for their own companies are therefore considerably more positive than for the industry as a whole.

Particularly positive outlook for individual companies

Only around one per cent expect their own business performance to deteriorate. The current economic situation is also viewed largely positively: 68 per cent of exhibitors and 57 per cent of visitors rate the current situation in their industry positively. Over the next two years, 48 per cent of exhibitors expect the economic situation in the industry to improve, while a further 42 per cent expect it to remain stable.

“The positive expectations of many companies are reflected in the current sentiment among our member companies in the maritime supply industry. Despite geopolitical uncertainties, confidence remains high, supported by strong ordering activity in shipping. Decarbonisation, digitalisation, automation and security continue to be important market drivers for newbuilds and retrofits, offering excellent prospects for the shipbuilding and marine equipment industries,” says **Hauke Schlegel**, Managing Director of VDMA Marine Equipment and Systems.

A similar picture emerges from the latest economic survey by VDMA Marine Equipment and Systems: 63 per cent of the member companies surveyed expect positive market development abroad in the medium term, compared with 49 per cent in Germany.

Energy efficiency tops the agenda for the future

The responses from surveyed visitors show which issues are expected to be particularly important for the maritime industry in the years ahead. **Energy efficiency** clearly ranks first at **60 per cent**,

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followed by **maritime security and defence** at **47 per cent** and **artificial intelligence** at **45 per cent**. Climate targets and regulation are identified as a key issue for the future by 38 per cent, followed by alternative fuels at 36 per cent and the shortage of skilled workers at 33 per cent.

“The results reflect our own perception: energy efficiency, maritime security and defence, and artificial intelligence are among the key issues shaping the future of our industry. The technological, economic and political transformation associated with these developments requires substantial investment, innovation and a highly skilled workforce. At the same time, we need to focus more closely on the availability of critical raw materials and the resilience of global supply chains. Both factors will be crucial to the future competitiveness and resilience of the maritime industry in Germany and Europe,” says **Dr Reinhard Lüken**, Managing Director of VSM.

“The survey shows that the maritime industry is looking to the future with confidence and setting clear priorities. This is precisely where SMM comes in: we bring together international players whose technologies and solutions are shaping the future of shipping,” says **Claus Ulrich Selbach**, Vice President Exhibitions Maritime & Energy at Hamburg Messe und Congress.

About the survey

The results are based on a survey of visitors and exhibitors conducted following SMM 2026. The findings provide a current snapshot of sentiment across the international maritime industry represented at SMM.

About SMM

SMM – the world’s leading maritime industry event – is the leading international trade fair for the maritime industry. Under the guiding theme **“Driving the Maritime Transition”**, SMM brings together key players from across the maritime industry to discuss major challenges and opportunities shaping its future and actively drive the industry’s development. SMM 2026 welcomed more than **50,000 participants from 134 nations**, setting a new attendance record. Around **2,300 exhibiting companies from 66 countries** presented their solutions across more than 90,000 square metres in twelve halls. More than 70 per cent of exhibiting companies came from outside Germany. SMM represents the entire maritime value chain, bringing together shipyards, shipping companies, suppliers, classification societies, technology companies, start-ups, research institutions, policymakers and international organisations. Key topics include energy efficiency and decarbonisation, maritime security and defence, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems and digital technologies. Numerous innovations and world premieres are presented to an international industry audience for the first time at SMM. A comprehensive **conference and stage programme** complements the exhibition, including the TradeWinds Shipowners Forum, Maritime Future Summit, gmec – Global Maritime Environmental Congress, MS&D Expo & Conference, and

Offshore Dialogue. The next SMM will take place in Hamburg from **5 to 8 September 2028**. **Further information**: SMM – driving the maritime transition

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