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SMM

Press Release · Pressemitteilung

SMM 2026: Security becomes the dominant issue for the maritime industry

Four intensive days at the trade fair reveal a shift in priorities: decarbonisation remains a strategic goal, but security and resilience are increasingly shaping the agenda. At the same time, the industry continues to invest despite uncertainty and is calling for faster innovation and implementation.

Hamburg, 4 September 2026 – More than 50,000 participants from 134 nations, around 2,300 exhibiting companies from 66 countries and an exceptionally positive mood across the industry: SMM 2026 closes with record attendance. For four days, shipping companies, shipyards, suppliers, technology companies, navies and international organisations discussed investment, new technologies and partnerships.

“What we have seen over these four days is an industry with a strong determination to shape its future. Despite geopolitical and regulatory uncertainty, companies are investing, seeking solutions and building new partnerships. Across all topics, there was a clear sense that available technologies need to be deployed more quickly,” says **Claus Ulrich Selbach**, Vice President Exhibitions Maritime & Energy at Hamburg Messe und Congress.

Security and resilience move centre stage

The growing importance of maritime security was particularly evident in the new **Naval Hall B8**. The **MS&D Conference & Expo** and the **Naval Stage** brought together international navies, defence companies, maritime suppliers and providers of dual-use technologies. The focus was on unmanned systems, sensors, cybersecurity and the protection of critical maritime infrastructure.
“Decarbonisation remains important, but safety at sea and the protection of sea lanes are currently the number one priority. We need to get ships into the water quickly and significantly shorten procurement processes. Industry is ready: many of the products and technologies we need already exist and do not have to be developed from scratch,” says **Klaus Deleroi**, Managing Director of REINTJES.

At the **MS&D Conference**, Vice Admiral Jan Christian Kaack, in his final public appearance as Chief of the German Navy, emphasised the need for greater operational readiness, shorter procurement processes and increased use of unmanned systems.

Efficiency and AI: Solutions for today

While security and resilience are playing a greater role on the agenda, decarbonisation and energy efficiency remain key challenges. At the new **Energy Efficiency Hub**, 24 companies presented solutions across 300 square metres that can already help reduce fuel consumption and emissions today. The capacity audience at the **Global Maritime Environmental Congress (gmec)** also demonstrated that further decarbonisation remains a major concern for the industry.

In digitalisation and artificial intelligence, the focus shifted towards implementation. Rather than discussing theoretical potential, conversations increasingly centred on specific applications – from fleet optimisation and predictive maintenance to autonomous systems and AI-based situational awareness.

Strong willingness to invest despite uncertainty

Over the four days, exhibitors reported high-quality discussions, a strong presence of decision-makers and continued willingness to invest. “SMM 2026 has been an excellent week for Alfa Laval, with a high level of engagement and substantive conversations across the industry. There is clearly still uncertainty in the market, but we also see a real willingness to invest where solutions can deliver tangible operational and environmental value,” says **Helena Sannicolò**, Vice President, Marketing & Communications, Ocean Division at **Alfa Laval**.

The international participation underlined SMM’s global reach. The event featured 26 national pavilions and delegations from around 30 countries. For the first time, **India, Cyprus and Brazil** were among the countries represented with their own national pavilions. More than 70 per cent of exhibitors came from outside Germany.

“After four days of SMM, one thing is particularly clear to me: this industry is not standing still. Companies are investing, seeking partners and looking to deploy available technologies more quickly,” concludes **Selbach**.

Maritime security and defence will remain firmly on the agenda in Hamburg in 2027: the next **MS&D Conference & Expo** will take place on **8 and 9 December 2027**, alongside the Global Security and Defence Summit (GSIS) at the CCH – Congress Center Hamburg.

The next SMM will take place in Hamburg from 5 to 8 September 2028.

The participant figures are based on an extrapolation from the final day of the event as of 12 noon and are preliminary.

Further information: SMM – Driving the Maritime Transition | 1–4 September 2026

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