



WEGEMT VISIONS

Best PhD Thesis Award

The Background

The WEGEMT VISIONS extends on an almost 20-year long tradition that started with the VISIONS project which was funded by the European Commission's FP5 and its WATERBORNE related VISIONS competitions, which WEGEMT established back in 2005.

The competitions were initially conceived and organised with the aim of encouraging and awarding high-quality research and innovation in the WATERBORNE sector. The success of the original VISIONS competitions in the WATERBORNE sector was recognised by industry, academia and the European Commission, which led to its follow-up by a series of consecutive EU-funded projects from FP6, FP7, H2020 and Horizon Europe (such as the Visions Olympics and the TRA VISIONS projects) that have successfully and consistently over the last two decades generated groundbreaking new and innovative ideas for the WATERBORNE sector.

Extending on this long-established "VISIONS" brand tradition, WEGEMT VISIONS, in its current iteration, will focus, for the first time ever, on the University sector by identifying outstanding doctoral research in marine technology and related sciences and recognising and awarding the best PhD thesis produced in the European WATERBORNE sector.

The Best PhD Thesis Award

This competition aligns with WEGEMT's mission to update and extend the skills, knowledge, and competence of practising engineers and postgraduate students in the WATERBORNE sector. By highlighting exemplary PhD work, the competition encourages high-quality research and innovation, fostering collaborative efforts among universities within the WEGEMT network. In addition, the competition aims to promote the continuous advancement of education and the dissemination of cutting-edge knowledge in marine technology. It seeks to bridge the gap between WATERBORNE academia and industry that can lead to practical solutions for real-world challenges. Through this initiative, WEGEMT emphasises the importance of excellence in research, inspiring the next generation of marine technologists to strive for breakthroughs that can benefit both academia and the maritime industry.

By celebrating the achievements of doctoral researchers, the WEGEMT BEST PhD THESIS AWARD will acknowledge individual excellence and reinforce the collective progress in WATERBORNE science and technology. This contributes to the development of a robust educational ecosystem and supports the creation of innovative, sustainable technologies that can address global maritime challenges.

Scope and eligibility

The competition covers PhD thesis dissertations completed at WEGEMT member universities of maritime technology, which should be the ones awarding the title. Joint degrees involving more than one university are also accepted.

The competition is open to all candidates who have successfully defended their PhD theses in maritime technology during the five calendar years previous to the year of the announced Award.

The thesis topics must be related to maritime technology, including but not limited to the following WATERBORNE aligned themes:

- **Ships & Shipping**

Thesis has a focus on merchant vessels and their integration into the logistic chain.

Main focal points (subtopics) are:

- Zero emission shipping
- Connected shipping
- Safety of ship and passengers
- Ship design, production and decommissioning

- **Blue Growth**

Thesis has a focus on all new activities at sea that will allow for a sustainable economic growth and exploit the full potential of the oceans. Main focal points (subtopics) are:

- Living and working at sea
- The ocean as a source of resources

- **Ports & Logistics:**

Thesis has a focus on all activities in ports, the hinterland and the interconnection of modalities. Main focal points (subtopics) are:

- Port operations
- Integration of waterborne transport and other transport modes
- Infrastructure
- Security

Multidisciplinary PhD thesis topics related to more traditional maritime technology themes, including but not limited to the following, are also eligible:

- Naval architecture
- Marine engineering
- Ocean engineering
- Offshore engineering
- Maritime transport and logistics
- Inland waterway transport
- Protection of the marine environment
- Marine safety

Submission requirements

Candidates must submit the following documents:

1. The filled form of application (Online).
2. A copy of the PhD thesis.
3. A brief statement of the applicant summarising the thesis and indicating its strong points (not more than 5 pages).
4. A power point presentation of the candidate summarising the thesis and indicating its strong points (max 10 slides).
5. A pitch presentation video of the candidate summarising the thesis and indicating its strong points (1 to 3 minutes long).
6. A CV of the candidate.
7. Proof of successful defence (e.g., a degree certificate).
8. Letter of recommendation from supervisor (optional)

All documents must be drafted in English and submitted in electronic format through the competition website.

Evaluation process

Submissions will be evaluated by a panel consisting of five distinguished individuals in maritime technology (three academics and two industry experts), who will be appointed by the WEGEMT's Executive Committee following a proposal by the Chair.

Stage 0

The evaluation will take place in two stages following a preliminary screening (Stage 0) performed by the WEGEMT Secretariat. Stage 0 will screen submissions received within the deadline to ensure (i) candidate eligibility and (ii) that all required documents have been submitted. Late, ineligible or incomplete submissions will be discarded at this stage. Within one week from the submission deadline, the Secretariat will finalize Stage 0 and ensure all eligible submissions are available for review by the evaluation panel.

Stage 1

Stage 1 will construct a short-list of 5 submissions solely based on the application forms. Each panellist will assess every submission against the first 5 criteria listed in the next section. The sum of these partial scores will be the panellist's score for that submission. An average score will be calculated for each submission among all 5 panellists. The industrial and collaboration bonuses will be added to these average scores to form the total score of each submission. The five submissions with the highest scores will be short-listed for Stage 2. All submissions with a score equal to the fifth best submission will be short-listed irrespective of their number. In addition to the short-listed submissions, the panel will produce a signed protocol of the partial and total scores of all submissions assessed in Stage 1.

Stage 2

Stage 2 will select the top winner among the 5 short-listed submissions of the previous stage. The process will be the same as in Stage 1, but this time will be based on the full PhD dissertation. Submissions with a final score equal to the best submission will be considered winners, too. Winners sharing the same score cannot have different award levels and will share

the winning prize equally. In addition to naming the winners, the panel will produce a signed protocol of the partial and total scores of all submissions assessed in Stage 2.

Evaluation criteria

The evaluation will be based on the following criteria (maximum 100 points):

1. **Originality:** Understood as the extent to which the thesis makes an important and innovative contribution to understanding and knowledge within the respective theme **[max. score: 20]**
2. **Academic excellence:** The panellists will expect to see evidence of, or the potential for, some of the following types of characteristics across and possibly beyond the thesis theme/area:
 - Agenda-setting, a formative influence on the intellectual agenda
 - Research that is leading or at the forefront of the research theme/area
 - Great novelty in developing new thinking, new techniques or novel results
 - Major influence on a research theme or area
 - Developing new paradigms or fundamental new concepts for research **[max. score: 30]**
3. **Significance:** Understood as the extent to which the work has influenced, or has the capacity to influence, knowledge and scholarly thought or the development and understanding of policy and/or practice **[max. score: 15]**
4. **Societal impact:** understood as including, but not limited to, an effect on, change or benefit to:
 - the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding
 - of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation, industry or individuals
 - in any geographic location, whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally
 - Societal impact includes the reduction or prevention of risk, cost or other negative effects
 - Major changes in policy or practice
 - Major influence on processes, production and management
 - Major influence on user engagement
 - A primary or essential point of reference of profound influence **[max. score: 15]**
5. **Clarity and quality of presentation:** Understood as the extent to which the text is reader friendly, the argumentation is solid and comprehensible, and there is a clear logical thread **[max. score: 10]**
6. **Industrial involvement bonus:** PhD projects funded by an industrial partner are eligible for a bonus of 5 points to be added to the average score of the panellists. The thesis supervisor should certify this condition with their letter of recommendation **[industrial bonus: 5]**
7. **Joint degree bonus:** PhD projects offered by more than one university or involving a more than 3-month external stay in another European maritime technology university are eligible for a bonus of 5 points to be added to the average score of the panellists.

The thesis supervisor should certify this condition with their letter of recommendation
[collaboration bonus: 5]

Awards

A prize of up to €5,000* is earmarked for the top winner. In addition, the winner will receive a certificate of excellence. The Winner will be invited to an award ceremony at a WATERBORNE related high level event or at the WEGEMT General Assembly.

**(NOTE the value of the awards will depend on the support gained from companies)*

Timing

The competition will officially be announced in July 2025. Submissions must be received by 30 December. Evaluation should be finalised by 30 March 2026 and the award ceremony will be organised to take place in Q3 of the following year.

The first PhD Award will have the following timing

Official start date for the contest	01 - July - 2025
End of registration period/ Abstract Submission Deadline	31 - Dec - 2025 (23:59 CET)
Final version submission deadline	30 - Mar - 2026 (23:59 CET)
Awards ceremony	To be announced