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From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director

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To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

Subject: COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION - SYNOPSIS REPORT Accompanying the document COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS EU Ports Strategy

Delegations will find attached document SWD(2026) 81 final.

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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION - SYNOPSIS REPORT

Accompanying the document

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

EU Ports Strategy

{COM(2026) 112 final}

1. INTRODUCTION

This synopsis report (the report) provides an overview of the consultation activities in support of the Communication from the European Commission on the EU ports strategy (the EU ports strategy or the strategy). The strategy has been developed in response to European Commission President von der Leyen's mission letter to Commissioner Tzitzikostas¹, and to specific calls for action from the European Parliament².

Stakeholders were consulted in line with the better regulation framework³, ensuring a transparent, meaningful and proportionate approach to consultation. This enabled the Commission to: (i) get useful feedback from a wide range of stakeholders; (ii) take the views of these stakeholders into account; and (iii) where relevant, reflect them in the EU ports strategy. In particular, the consultations sought to identify key challenges faced by ports across the EU and collect suggestions for actions that could be reflected in the strategy.

This report highlights the main issues, drivers and recommendations that emerged during the consultation, providing an evidence base for the EU ports strategy. The contributions received through the Commission's Have your say portal or expressed by stakeholders in the various fora (as detailed below) cannot under any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission or its departments, nor are they a representative sample of the views of the EU population.

2. CONSULTATION STRATEGY

The Commission gathered input for the EU ports strategy through a combination of qualitative, participatory and structured consultation tools. The consultation process started in early 2025 and ended in December 2025.

It combined open and targeted consultation formats, including an open call for evidence, strategic political dialogues, meetings of established expert and stakeholder fora, sectoral social dialogue, thematic conferences and bilateral meetings. It included the following key events and milestones:

- 20 February, 20 June and 3 October 2025 – meetings of the European Ports Forum (EPF) expert group⁴;
- 5 March and 29 October 2025 – Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Ports⁵;
- 7-9 May 2025 – European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) Annual Conference⁶;

¹ European Commission President von der Leyen's mission letter to Commissioner Tzitzikostas, available [here](#).

² European Parliament [resolution of 17 January 2024 on building a comprehensive European port strategy](#).

³ [Better regulation – European Commission](#).

⁴ The [European Ports Forum](#) is a Commission expert group established in 2017 to provide a structured platform for dialogue between the Commission, Member States and port stakeholders. It also advises the Commission on initiatives to promote and support the uniform implementation of Regulation (EU) 2017/352 establishing a framework for the provision of port services and common rules on the financial transparency of ports.

⁵ [Ports – Sectoral social dialogue](#)

⁶ [ESPO Annual Conference 2025](#). More information available [here](#).

- 1 July 2025 – strategic dialogue on the EU ports strategy chaired by the Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, Apostolos Tzitzikostas⁷;
- 30 June-28 July 2025 – call for evidence⁸;
- 4 November 2025 – strategic dialogue on the security dimension of the EU ports strategy co-chaired by Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, and by Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, Magnus Brunner⁹.

The consultation targeted the following key stakeholders relevant to the ports sector and, through the various consultation tools used, ensured balanced representation across stakeholder groups and geographic regions:

- managing bodies of ports and port service providers;
- Member State authorities (governments, public administrations including transport, energy, the environment, law enforcement and customs authorities);
- regional and local authorities;
- shipping and logistics companies;
- energy providers and other companies operating in and around port areas;
- social partners;
- academic experts and think tanks;
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and coastal communities.

3. CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

3.1. Strategic dialogues

To complement this broad consultation strategy and to explore specific issues in more depth, the Commission organised two high-level strategic dialogues. The strategic dialogues brought together representatives from ports, shipping, logistics, energy, industry, social partners, public authorities and EU agencies to jointly define priorities, opportunities and actions for the development of the EU ports strategy.

- The first dialogue, on 1 July 2025, a strategic dialogue on the EU ports strategy, was hosted by Commissioner Tzitzikostas. This dialogue brought together 18 participants representing European port organisations, shipping and maritime service providers, logistics and inland transport operators, rail, energy and fuels stakeholders, social partners and civil society organisations¹⁰. It focused on competitiveness, sustainability

⁷ [Strategic Dialogue on the Ports Strategy](#). More information available [here](#).

⁸ [The Call for Evidence on an EU Ports Strategy](#)

⁹ More information available [here](#).

¹⁰ Participants included representatives from the European Federation of Port Terminal Operators (FEPORT), the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA), the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO), the European Maritime Pilots' Association (EMPA), the World Shipping Council (WSC), the European Tugowners' Association (ETA), the European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP), the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), the European Dockworkers Council (EDC), the European Liaison Committee of Common Market

and energy transition, as well as security and network resilience. Participants emphasised the changing role of ports as critical infrastructure, challenges linked to decarbonisation and grid capacity, and the importance of coordinated EU support for resilience and hinterland connectivity.

- The second dialogue, a stakeholder dialogue on the security dimension of the EU ports strategy, was held on 4 November 2025. Co-hosted by Commissioners Tzitzikostas and Brunner, this dialogue focused on organised crime, cyber threats, hybrid risks, workforce protection and military mobility. 17 participants, representing EU agencies and institutions, national authorities (including law enforcement bodies, customs authorities and coast guards), port authorities and port associations, global shipping companies, social partners, cybersecurity bodies and people involved in defence took part in the dialogue¹¹. Stakeholders underlined the importance of public-private cooperation and information exchange and, building on the work of the European Ports Alliance¹², called for stronger joint platforms, better data sharing, minimum security standards, and better alignment of existing EU instruments.

3.2. European Ports Forum (EPF) expert group

The EPF is an expert group¹³ that supports the exchange of information and advises the Commission on port-related matters and on initiatives to promote and support uniform implementation of the Port Services Regulation¹⁴.

The group met three times in 2025 (20 February, 20 June and 3 October) and provided continuous structured feedback on the development of the EU ports strategy. Discussions covered competitiveness, foreign influence, security, resilience, sustainability, digitalisation, energy transition and the role of ports in military mobility. The EPF also served as a key channel

Forwarders (*Comité de Liaison Européen des Commissionnaires et Auxiliaires de Transport du Marché Commun*) (CLECAT), the Marine Care Association (MCA), the European Barge Union (EBU), the European Association of professional portside storekeepers for agribulk commodities (UNISTOCK), the Community of European Railways (CER), the European Onshore Power Supply Association (EOPSA), the European Dredging Association (EUDA), FuelsEurope and Transport & Environment (T&E).

¹¹ Participants included representatives from Europol, the Belgian National Drugs Commissioner, the Finnish Ports Association, the Rotterdam Sea Port Police, the French shipping and logistics company *Compagnie Maritime d’Affrètement* and *Compagnie Générale Maritime* (Maritime Freighting Company and General Maritime Company (CMA CGM)), Finnish Customs, the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, the Hellenic Coast Guard, the European Transport Workers’ Federation (ETF), the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), the Italian State Police, the Port of Burgas, Maersk, the EU Military Staff, the Hamburg Port Security Centre, the Hamburg Water Police, and Le Havre Rouen Paris (HAROPA) Ports.

¹² The [European Ports Alliance](#) and its public-private partnership, launched in January 2024 under the ProtectEU strategy, aims to bring all relevant stakeholders together, to develop solutions to protect ports and to boost resilience against organised crime at both major and minor ports.

¹³ The European Ports Forum consists of up to 43 members representing three main categories: (i) 27 Member State competent authorities responsible for port policy; (ii) 14 port sector associations, including port associations, trade and business associations and professional associations or other related sectors; and (iii) 2 other public bodies.

¹⁴ [Regulation \(EU\) 2017/352](#)

for discussing the preliminary results of the call for evidence (see Section 3.5) and ensuring coherence across consultation formats.

3.3. Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Ports

The SSDC is a key player in the social dialogue in the maritime transport sector¹⁵. Established in 2013, the SSCDC aims to improve the working and living conditions of port workers and boost the sector's competitiveness and productivity.

The SSDC meetings of 5 March and 29 October 2025 gave social partners an opportunity to provide input for the strategy, in particular, on the social aspect, including working conditions, skills, security awareness and workforce protection. These discussions highlighted the importance of treating workers as key partners in ensuring safe, resilient and competitive ports.

3.4. European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) Annual Conference

From 7 to 9 May 2025, the 21st [ESPO Annual Conference](#) took place in Thessaloniki under the theme *Towards a strategy for Europe's ports in the post-2024 era*. The event brought together more than two hundred participants from port authorities, public administrations and the broader port ecosystem and was a major consultation milestone for the development of the EU ports strategy.

As part of the consultation process, a parallel session was organised with Commissioner Tzitzikostas and around 30 port CEOs, focusing on sustainability, competitiveness and resilience. Ports underlined their role as critical infrastructure increasingly tasked with non-traditional public responsibilities, such as supporting the energy transition and military mobility. Concerns were raised regarding the implementation of onshore power supply, grid capacity constraints, funding needs, lengthy permitting procedures, geopolitical risks and cybersecurity challenges. Participants also stressed the need to consider different port segments, peripheral and outermost regions, and the potential of port clusters.

3.5. Call for evidence

The Commission call for evidence on the EU ports strategy, published on the Commission's [Have your say](#) portal, received 193 responses¹⁶. An additional 16 contributions were submitted after the deadline and analysed as part of the broader consultation process. All qualitative responses and supporting documents (translated into English using a Commission AI-powered tool) were taken into account.

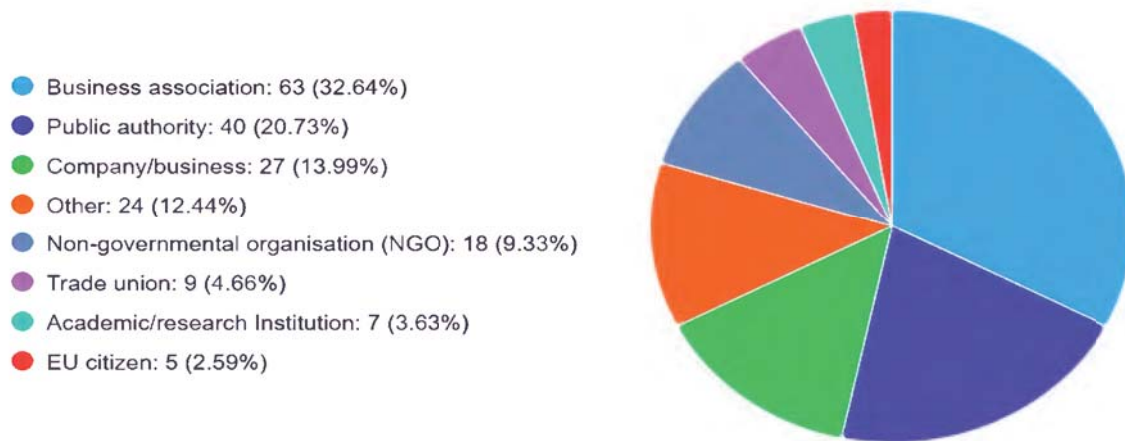
Respondents represented a broad cross-section of the port ecosystem, including port authorities, terminal operators, shipping companies, logistics providers, equipment manufacturers, technology providers, energy suppliers, wind and alternative fuels stakeholders,

¹⁵ The Committee is composed of representatives from various organisations, including the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), the International Dockworkers Council (IDC), the Federation of European Private Port Companies and Terminals (FEPOR), and the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO).

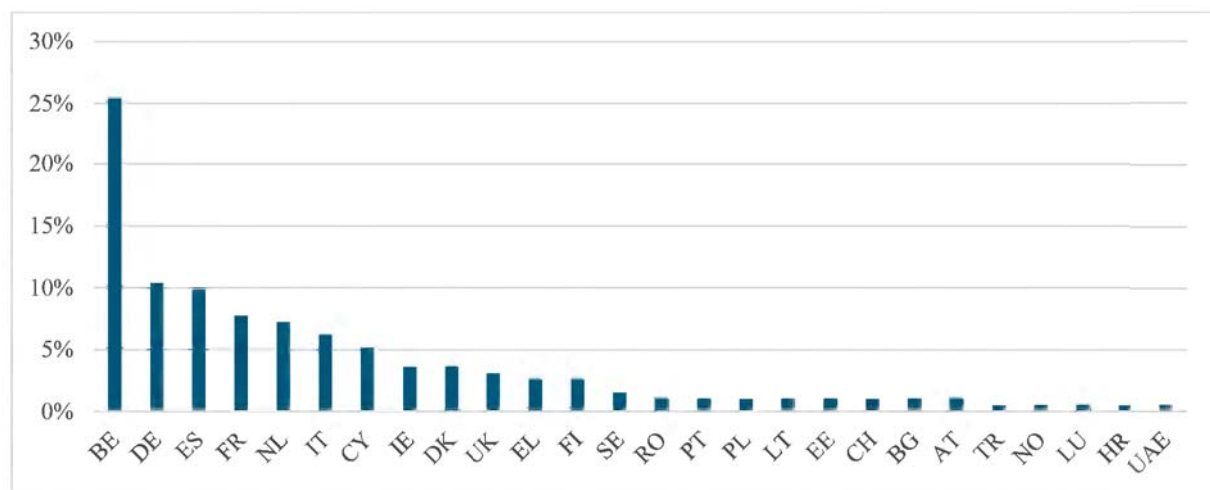
¹⁶ The statistics figures presented in this paragraph exclude these additional submissions. However, their content was analysed and taken into account as part of the broader consultation process.

trade unions, NGOs, academic and research institutions, and national and regional administrations.

The figure below shows the breakdown of **respondents by category**¹⁷.



In terms of **country distribution**, responses were received from stakeholders based in 21 EU Member States and from five non-EU countries (Norway, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom). Most responses came from Belgium (25.4%), because Belgium hosts many of the associations and organisations representing EU interest groups. This was followed by Germany (10.4%), Spain (10%), France (8%) and the Netherlands (7%).



The call for evidence complemented previous consultation activities and helped to validate and refine the policy directions for the strategy. The results of the call for evidence can be found on the Commission’s [better regulation portal](#). Annex 1 contains details of the inputs provided in the form of responses to the call for evidence.

¹⁷ Respondents were asked to describe themselves as a company/a business, business association, public authority, academic/research institution, NGO, trade union, EU citizen/non-EU citizen, or other.

3.6. Ad hoc responses

In addition to the formal consultation formats, the Commission received input through around 30 **bilateral meetings**. These exchanges involved a broad range of representatives, including representatives from ports and port authorities, trade associations from the port and cruise sectors, regional and local authorities, and Members of the European Parliament. They enabled more detailed discussion of specific challenges, regional contexts and sectoral perspectives and complemented the findings of the structured consultation activities.

4. INTERDEPENDENCIES AND CONSISTENCIES IN THE RESPONSES FROM STAKEHOLDERS

There was a high degree of consistency across stakeholder responses and consultation formats. Perspectives varied depending on stakeholders' roles and responsibilities, but their input was largely complementary.

Public authorities (Member States, regional and local authorities) broadly supported a comprehensive EU ports strategy providing policy coherence across transport, energy, security and industrial policies. They emphasised ports' strategic role, the importance of coordinated implementation of existing EU legislation, and the need to address security, resilience and military mobility.

Port authorities and port associations highlighted competitiveness challenges, investment gaps, grid constraints and permitting delays, while stressing the diversity of EU ports and the need for flexibility in any EU approach.

Port operators, shipping and logistics companies focused on operational efficiency, connectivity and predictability, supporting digitalisation and better hinterland connections while cautioning against regulatory fragmentation.

Social partners broadly welcomed the initiative. Trade unions stressed the need for strong commitments on skills, workers' safety and protection and social dialogue, while employers highlighted the importance of practical guidance, safety and adequate funding for workforce transitions. Both sides emphasised security, safety, competitiveness and cooperation through existing frameworks.

NGOs, academia and other stakeholders supported the strategy's focus on sustainability, resilience and societal value, while calling for stronger alignment between environmental objectives and competitiveness.

The responses revealed close links between competitiveness, sustainability, security and the social aspect, with stakeholders widely recognising that progress in one area depends on coordinated action in the others.

5. MAIN MESSAGES FROM ALL THE CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

The consultation process confirmed broad support for a comprehensive, non-legislative EU ports strategy addressing the evolving role of ports as economic gateways, clean energy hubs and critical infrastructure for security and resilience. After analysing the results of the consultation activities listed above, it is possible to summarise the input as follows.

i. Governance, coordination and regulatory framework

Overall, stakeholders supported greater coherence between and better coordination of existing legislation affecting ports rather than the introduction of new regulatory obligations. Simplification, better implementation and faster permitting procedures were recurrent requests. The majority of respondents across the board stressed the importance of recognising the diversity of EU ports and avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches, while ensuring a predictable and stable policy environment.

ii. Competitiveness and level playing field

Global competition, rising compliance costs and foreign influence were identified as major challenges. Stakeholders called for predictable State aid, competition policy and foreign investment screening frameworks. Concerns were raised about cumulative regulatory burdens and rising compliance costs, particularly for ports facing competition from non-EU hubs. Stakeholders therefore called for systematic competitiveness checks and closer coordination between transport, competition, trade and industrial policies.

iii. Digitalisation, efficiency and connectivity

Digitalisation was widely seen as a key enabler of efficiency, sustainability and security. Stakeholders supported interoperable digital systems, data sharing among port authorities, operators, people involved in logistics and public authorities, while ensuring cybersecurity and data protection. Better hinterland connectivity and the integration of ports into multimodal transport chains were also identified as essential to reduce congestion, improve reliability and strengthen the competitiveness of EU ports within global supply chains.

iv. Security, resilience and military mobility

Security concerns featured prominently across all consultation formats. Stakeholders underlined growing threats from organised crime, cyberattacks, hybrid risks, climate impacts and geopolitical instability. There was broad support for adopting a holistic approach to resilience, building on existing EU and international frameworks, strengthening information sharing and public-private cooperation, and supporting ports' dual civilian and military role, including through resilient and, where appropriate, dual-use infrastructure.

v. Ports and the energy transition

Stakeholders broadly agreed that ports are increasingly central to the energy transition, not only as transport nodes but also as energy hubs supporting alternative fuels, electrification and industrial decarbonisation. Stakeholders highlighted the need to support the deployment of onshore power supply, alternative fuels, hydrogen, offshore wind (including offshore floating

facilities) and related infrastructure, while maintaining a technology-neutral and flexible approach. Grid capacity constraints, high investment needs and lengthy permitting procedures were consistently identified as major bottlenecks.

vi. Funding and access to finance

Access to finance emerged as the main cross-cutting concern, especially given the increasing need to fund additional safety, security and energy transition investments. Stakeholders called for better coordination and use of existing and, in particular, adequate future EU funding instruments, simplified procedures and support for smaller ports and ports in peripheral and outermost regions.

i. Skills and social aspects

Stakeholders underlined that the success of the EU ports strategy depends on a skilled, protected and adaptable workforce. They stressed the importance of skills development, the safety of workers, social dialogue and fair transition measures to ensure social sustainability and accompany digitalisation, automation and the development of new technologies. Social partners highlighted the need to anticipate changing skills requirements through training, upskilling and reskilling, alongside adequate health and safety measures.

6. HOW FEEDBACK WAS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

The views expressed during the consultation process were instrumental for the preparation of the EU ports strategy by helping determine its overall structure and priorities.

On this basis, the EU ports strategy is structured around the core themes identified during the consultation process, including competitiveness, digitalisation, skills and social aspects, security and resilience, the energy transition, and funding and financing.

Stakeholders consistently highlighted competitive pressure from non-EU ports, rising regulatory and operational costs, and concerns about foreign influence and market concentration. These inputs resulted in the strategy's emphasising safeguarding the **competitiveness** of EU ports, ensuring a level playing field and strengthening coherence across EU policies affecting ports. Calls for clearer and more predictable State aid, foreign direct investment screening and competition policy frameworks were taken into account in the strategy's focus on better coordination, guidance and implementation of existing instruments.

Stakeholders stressed the potential of **digitalisation** to improve efficiency, security and sustainability, while highlighting uneven levels of digital maturity and persistent administrative burdens. These views are reflected in the strategy's focus on interoperable digital systems, data sharing and data storage in the EU, full implementation of the European maritime single window environment and better hinterland connectivity to reduce bottlenecks and emissions.

The consultation underlined ports' central role in supporting the **energy transition** and industrial decarbonisation, while identifying grid constraints, high investment needs and lengthy permitting procedures as key barriers. These are reflected in the strategy's focus on

ports as clean energy hubs, the need for multi-fuel approaches, and the importance of coordinated planning, faster permitting and investment in energy and grid infrastructure.

Security and resilience featured prominently across all consultation formats. Stakeholders drew attention to organised crime, cyber threats, hybrid risks, climate-related disruptions, and the growing importance of ports for **military mobility**. These responses fed into the strategy's holistic approach to resilience, building on existing EU and international frameworks, strengthening cooperation and information sharing, and supporting ports' dual civilian and military role through resilient and, where appropriate, dual-use infrastructure.

Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of **skills, training and attractive working conditions** to support the energy and digital transition of the port sector. These inputs are reflected in the attention the strategy pays to the social aspect, including upskilling and reskilling, social dialogue and workforce involvement as key enablers of competitiveness, safety and resilience.

Access to finance was identified as a cross-cutting challenge, particularly given the significant investment needs linked to decarbonisation, security and connectivity. Stakeholder input resulted in the strategy's emphasising better coordination and use of existing EU funding instruments, the simplification of procedures and the mobilisation of public and private investment, while recognising the specific needs of smaller ports and ports in peripheral and outermost regions.

Several proposals made during the consultation fall under Member State competences or require national or local action. Their implementation will therefore depend on Member States' priorities and readiness to act. The Commission stands ready to support and complement national action within its competences. The strategy also strengthens implementation follow-up by foreseeing a high-level Maritime Board to steer implementation of the Ports Strategy together with the EU Industrial Maritime Strategy, in dialogue with Member States and key sectors.

Overall, the responses to the consultation fed directly into the structure, priorities and strategic thrust of the EU ports strategy, while respecting the diversity of the EU's port system.

ANNEX: Factual report of the call for evidence

1. This Annex presents the main findings of the views expressed by stakeholders in response to the call for evidence, presented by thematic area.

1.1. Governance and regulatory framework

In general, respondents broadly supported the development of a comprehensive EU ports strategy, stressing the need for a stable, predictable governance framework and coordinated implementation of existing rules rather than new legislation or additional administrative burdens. Many also asked for the strategy to recognise ports' strategic and expanding role in the EU economy, encompassing the energy transition, industrial clustering, trade and security, while reflecting their diversity (core, regional, inland, island and outermost) and avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches.

In particular, respondents underlined the need for greater coherence across EU legislation affecting ports, faster permitting procedures, and more coordinated implementation of policies on port-related matters across Member States.

1.2. Competitiveness and a level playing field

Global competition and foreign influence were highlighted as major concerns. Respondents asked for stronger safeguards to protect critical port infrastructure and clear rules on foreign investment to ensure EU's strategic autonomy. Many supported robust, predictable screening of foreign direct investments to protect critical port assets, while cautioning that screening must remain balanced and not deter productive investment.

Some public authorities highlighted increasing concentration and vertical integration along maritime logistics chains (such as liner shipping into terminal and hinterland services), calling for vigilant mergers and competition control, including for vertical integration that could affect port competition and user choice. In parallel, they called for the safeguarding of public ownership of port land and waters where applicable and for the recognition of diversity in concession models, while considering more comparable concession terms and durations to support fair competition.

Respondents called for a dedicated State aid framework for ports, to address disadvantages in the face of global competitors and provide clarity on eligible support measures.

Several terminal operators also identified gaps in current aid schemes for terminal operators and asked for a tailored State aid framework that reflects ports' multifunctional role and investment needs.

Several responses also asked the Commission to systematically assess the competitiveness impacts of future measures (especially for new EU maritime legislation). Respondents expressed concern that climate-related costs and congestion could divert cargo to non-EU ports.

Respondents supported EU action to promote innovation pilots, testbeds and regulatory sandboxes, as well as automation and the wider uptake of emerging technologies.

Finally, several respondents called for guidance to ensure that EU support for port projects in third countries (under the Global Gateway¹⁸ for example) align with EU strategic interests and do not distort competition with EU ports.

1.3. Ports as enablers of the energy transition & environmental protection

Many respondents underlined the strategic role of ports as clean energy hubs, central to the EU's decarbonisation and industrial policy. They called in particular for support for offshore wind, hydrogen, carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS), and onshore power supply (OPS) deployment, alongside the development of new infrastructure for alternative fuels. Respondents urged the Commission to work on EU codes of practice and EU-funded pilots for the safe storage and bunkering of hydrogen, ammonia, methanol and batteries, including fire safety, detection and emergency response protocols.

Respondents stressed that port fuel and bunkering infrastructure should be developed on a technology-neutral, multi-fuel basis, to avoid lock-in and keep investment options open as new fuels become available.

Views diverged on liquefied natural gas (LNG); some respondents asked the Commission to repurpose LNG terminals as multi-molecular hubs (including hydrogen carriers and CO₂ transport and storage infrastructure), while others urged it to divert new investment away from LNG towards green hydrogen and e-fuels.

Respondents also underlined the need for coherent investment in port-side electricity grids, storage capacity and smart energy systems. Respondents proposed that the Commission introduce EU-level onshore power supply (OPS) price transparency guidance, OPS tax exemptions, grid stress tests in major ports, and priority grid access in the EU grids package¹⁹.

Many respondents, including port operators, also emphasised that faster and more efficient permitting procedures are essential for deploying energy infrastructure at scale and on time. They argued that permitting delays undermine EU's competitiveness and risk slowing down the energy transition and therefore called for simplified and coordinated approval processes across Member States, including net-zero acceleration areas and recognition that port decarbonisation projects are of overriding public interest. Synergies between the trans-European transport network (TEN-T)²⁰ and the trans-European network for energy (TEN-E)²¹ were also highlighted.

On the environmental protection front, several respondents asked for the streamlining of strategic environmental assessments/environmental impact assessments and permitting procedures for port upgrades while maintaining robust safeguards, including the management of dredged material using the best available techniques. Certain NGOs highlighted the need for stronger environmental safeguards, such as air and water quality monitoring, measures to deal

¹⁸ The [Global Gateway](#), launched by the European Commission and the EU High Representative in 2021, works to establish sustainable and trusted connections that work for people and the planet. It aims to tackle the most pressing global challenges, from fighting climate change to improving health systems and boosting competitiveness and the security of global supply chains.

¹⁹ [European Grids Package](#)

²⁰ The EU's trans-European transport network policy, the TEN-T policy, is a key instrument for planning and developing coherent, efficient, multimodal and high-quality transport infrastructure across the EU. [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1679](#)

²¹ The trans-European network for energy (TEN-E) policy is a long-standing EU instrument for connecting EU countries' energy networks, strengthening cohesion and developing solidarity and cooperation across the EU. [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/869](#)

with underwater noise, and better waste and pollution management. Several responses called for greater use of nature-based solutions and circular economy practices in ports.

1.4. Security, resilience & military mobility

Security and resilience emerged as major themes. Respondents raised concerns about organised crime, drug trafficking, foreign interference and cyberattacks in ports and their operations. Respondents asked for the Commission to strengthen port security frameworks, update the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS) rules, improve customs cooperation, and promote harmonised cybersecurity standards. Notably, respondents drew attention to the need to address modern threats, expand biometric access controls and establish an EU-wide suspicious transaction reporting system. They also asked for the Commission to issue sector-specific guidance for ports in the context of Directive (EU) 2022/2555 on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, also known as NIS2²².

In particular, many respondents called for the strengthening and provision of resources for the European Ports Alliance, the development of an EU cargo crime database and a Trusted Truckers protocol, and for an annual Europol-coordinated intelligence overview of port threats.

On military mobility, the dual role of ports for civil use and military mobility was emphasised, with calls for targeted investment in resilient dual-use infrastructure, as well as greater integration of ports into civil protection and military mobility planning.

The need for investment in adaptation to climate risks, including responses to the rise in sea levels, drought, saline intrusion and floods, was also highlighted. Respondents called for an EU programme to map port climate risks and co-finance adaptation measures, supported by guidance on resilient design.

1.5. Efficient port operations and digitalisation

Many responses supported the acceleration of the digital transformation of ports through the roll-out of port community systems, EU port data spaces, and interoperable digital platforms. Respondents also highlighted the need for digital port masterplans, supported by EU guidance and funding.

Stakeholders asked the Commission to ensure the full implementation of the European maritime single window environment²³ and further simplification of customs (including a streamlined EU maritime space/blue belt), with harmonised checks and single-portal reporting to reduce the administrative burden for intra-EU traffic.

Respondents, including many public authorities, also stressed the need to strengthen hinterland connectivity (rail, inland waterways, multimodal links) and remove bottlenecks, to increase efficiency and to reduce emissions.

1.6. Funding and investment

Access to finance emerged as a central concern across responses. Respondents asked the Commission to simplify EU funding streams and procedures, set up a dedicated Connecting

²² [Directive \(EU\) 2022/2555](#)

²³ The European maritime single window environment (EMSWe), established by [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1239](#), aims to harmonise and simplify reporting requirements for ships arriving at, staying in and departing from EU ports. EMSWe became applicable on 15 August 2025.

Europe Facility envelope for ports, and reinvestment EU emissions trading system (ETS)²⁴ and FuelEU²⁵ revenues in port decarbonisation and digitalisation. The importance of mobilising private investments was also underlined by respondents.

Respondents also underlined the need to prioritise the use of tailored EU funding instruments for regional ports (in outermost regions for example) by providing services of general economic interest, and to bear in mind the cross-border nature of port operations in the design of funding. They called for targeted measures for outermost regions and small ports, which are affected by specific connectivity gaps and have higher unit costs. Ports also identified very high capital expenditure needs for the energy transition, for connectivity and for decarbonisation, pointing out that the complex funding landscape impedes timely project delivery.

Respondents asked the Commission to establish a Port Competitiveness Fund to co-finance electrification, hinterland connections and digital tools.

Respondents also highlighted the role of de-risking tools such as guarantees, European Investment Bank support, contracts for difference and export credits, and the need for predictable long-term investment frameworks to de-risk clean infrastructure.

1.7. Social aspect and workforce upskilling

Many responses emphasised the importance of a people-centred transition. Trade unions and social partners called for social conditionalities in EU funding, protection against social dumping and stronger social dialogue.

Respondents stressed the importance of upskilling and reskilling to handle new fuels, digital tools and automation, and urged the Commission to establish common minimum qualifications for key port roles and promote the mutual recognition of qualifications across the EU.

Several responses also highlighted the need to attract more women and young people to the sector, and to ensure safe and fair working conditions.

²⁴ European Commission, '[EU ETS – EU Emission Trading System](#)'.

²⁵ [Regulation \(EU\) 2023/1805](#)