

EU Ports Strategy

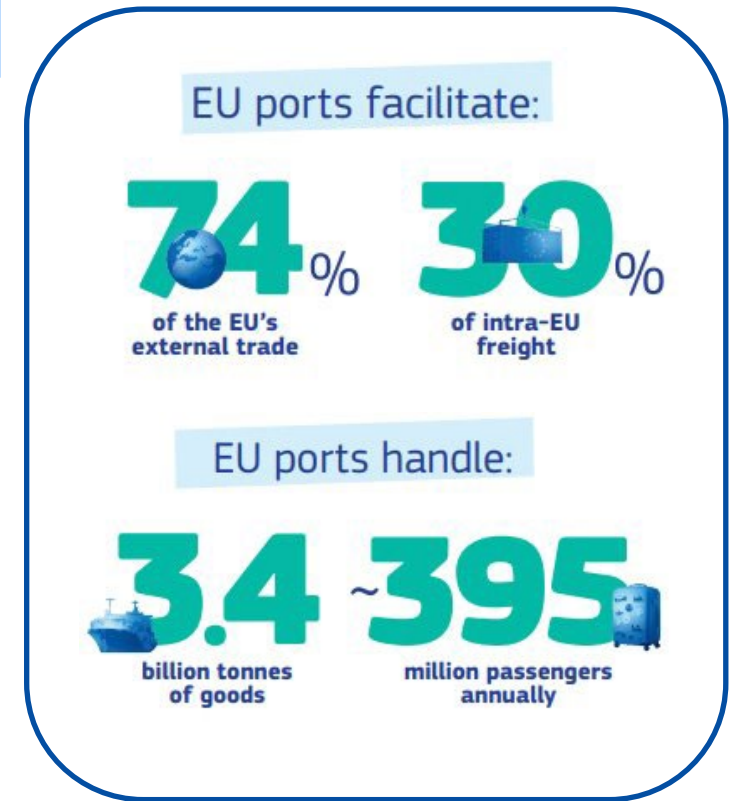
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The strategic importance of EU ports

Ports are **critical infrastructure** at the heart of Europe's economy, security and sustainability.

- **Gateways to global trade:** EU ports handle over **3.4 billion tonnes of goods (74% of EU external trade)** and nearly **400m passengers annually**.
- **Drivers of competitiveness and industrial strength:** Ports underpin the EU's export capacity, supply chains and logistics networks, supporting around **423.000 direct jobs** and generating approximately **€90 billion turnover**.
- **Energy and climate transition hubs:** Around **40% of cargo handled is energy-related**, positioning ports as key platforms for electrification, offshore wind deployment, hydrogen imports and alternative fuels infrastructure.
- **Anchors of the blue economy and coastal cohesion:** Ports sustain **coastal, island & OR communities**, fisheries, maritime clusters and regional economies, contributing to territorial cohesion and sustainable blue growth.
- **Pillars of resilience, economic security and defence:** Ports are strategic **dual-use infrastructure**, critical for supply chain resilience, **military mobility** and protection against cyber, hybrid and organised crime threats.



550 ports

connecting Europe
and beyond*

*Ports on the TEN-T Network



327

Maritime ports



223

Inland ports



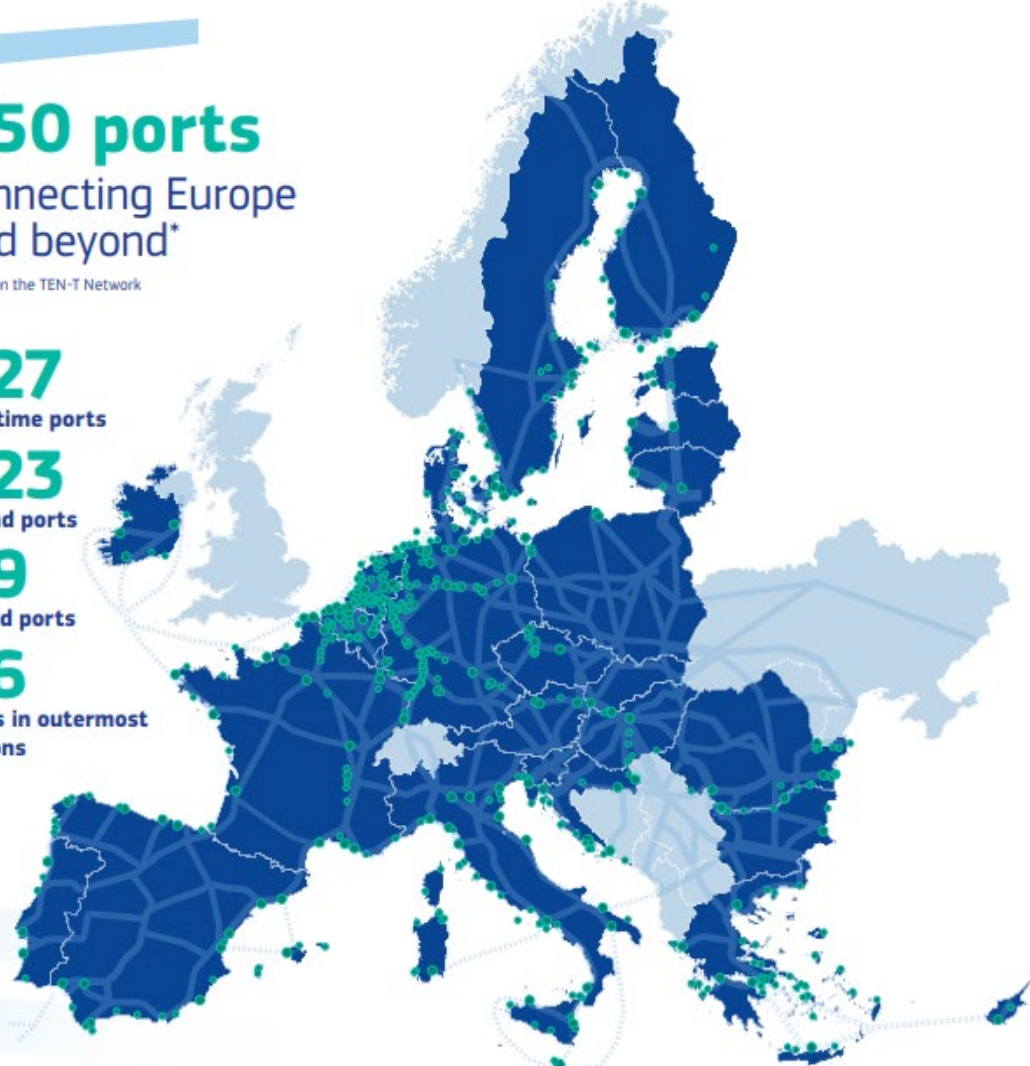
99

Island ports



26

Ports in outermost
regions



St. Martin (FR)



Mayotte (FR)



Guadeloupe Martinique (FR)



Réunion (FR)



Canary Islands (ES)



Azores (PT)



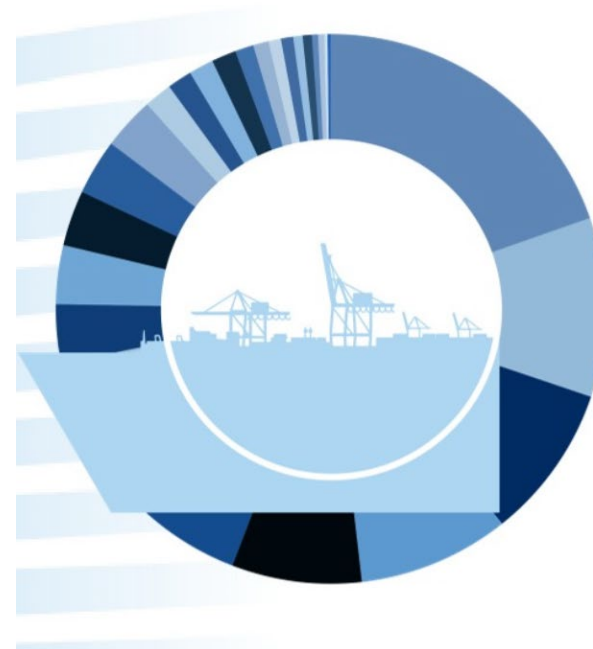
Madeira (PT)



Guiana (FR)

EU ports in numbers

Europe's economic security, clean industrial transition and global connectivity depend on **strong, competitive, sustainable and secure ports.**



108	Germany	8	Bulgaria
58	Netherlands	8	Estonia
50	Italy	8	Hungary
49	France	6	Ireland
42	Spain	5	Poland
41	Greece	4	Austria
27	Sweden	4	Malta
20	Belgium	3	Latvia
19	Croatia	3	Lithuania
19	Finland	2	Cyprus
18	Portugal	2	Slovakia
18	Romania	1	Luxembourg
17	Denmark	1	Slovenia
9	Czechia		



EU Ports Strategy: 5 pillars

Boosting the competitiveness, security and sustainability of EU ports

The Strategy supports EU ports by

Strengthening competitiveness, innovation and digitalisation.

Establishing **guiding principles for EU funding & investments in third-country ports**, developing **guidance on foreign ownership of EU ports**, and promoting **innovation**.

Advancing the energy transition, sustainability and clean industries.

Taking measures to promote **electrification & improved grid connection**. Setting out a **new roadmap for competitive small and medium-sized ports**.

Protecting and securing ports.

Combatting **drug trafficking & emerging threats**, port worker **background checks** & third-country **port assessments**, sharing **cybersecurity best practices**, & conducting an EU-wide security risk assessment.

Promoting social cohesion, skills and quality jobs.

Supporting **small & medium-sized ports** by promoting innovation, clean energy, security & connectivity, developing a **skilled workforce** & providing guidance on **maritime safety** & alternative fuels.

Facilitating access to finance and investment.

Clearer & more **coordinated funding principles** while facilitating access to advisory services & de-risking tools, with particular attention to the needs of small & medium-sized ports.



Pillar I – Competitiveness, Innovation & Digitalisation

Key challenges

- Competitiveness:
 - EU ports compete for global trade, investment and logistics flows.
 - Level-playing field with 3rd country ports.
 - Efficient hinterland connections and logistics chains are essential advantages.
- Economic security
 - Risks and opportunities of foreign ownership and influence in strategic port infrastructure.
 - Digital systems and logistics platforms are part of strategic infrastructure.
- Innovation & digitalisation
 - New technologies (AI, automation, clean technologies) boost efficiency and sustainability.
 - Digital solutions optimise port calls, logistics chains and data sharing.

Flagship Actions

Support the digital and green transformation of European ports through **innovation, promoting scale-up, replication and uptake** of innovative port equipment and technologies.

Develop **guidance to Member States with criteria for assessing foreign investments in ports & a framework for mapping and monitoring foreign investments in ports.**

Use **guiding principles for EU funding and investments in third country ports** (Annex 1).

Recommendations to Member States

- Play a leading role in setting global technical standards.
- Prevent, mitigate and tackle the risks associated with foreign ownership and control of strategic dual-use port infrastructures.
- Streamline land use planning and permitting procedures for additional areas for port use and take-up of innovation in ports.
- Aim for a balance between return on investments for private operators and suitable contractual obligations.

Pillar II – Energy Transition, Sustainability & Clean Industries

EU ports are central to the **decarbonisation** of maritime transport and industry. They are key **gateways for renewable energy, hydrogen imports and clean fuels**, and essential to achieving EU climate and energy objectives.

Key challenges



- High investment needs for OPS and alternative fuels infrastructure
- Grid capacity constraints & coordination of port and shipping demand
- Slow and complex permitting procedures
- Risk of fragmentation and uneven deployment across Member States

Flagship Actions

Accelerate permit-granting and provide faster assessment procedures for strategic energy, recycling and decarbonisation port-related projects, through the Grids Package and the Environmental Omnibus.

Accelerate **port electrification**, provide timely and non-discriminatory access to the grids.

Promote **partnerships for energy cooperation in and around port areas** for sustainable use of energy, including hydrogen.

Recommendations to Member States

- Prioritise port electrification and grid reinforcement in national energy plans.
- Allocate a part of ETS revenues to maritime decarbonisation investments across the maritime cluster, incl. sustainable infrastructure and OPS.
- Streamline permitting procedures for strategic port energy projects.
- Facilitate coordination between transport, energy and industry authorities.

Pillar III – Protect & Secure Ports

EU ports are **critical infrastructure** for trade, energy supply and military mobility. Growing threats from organised crime, cyberattacks and hybrid risks require stronger protection of port operations and logistics chains.

Key challenges

- Organised crime infiltration in container logistics and port operations.
- Increasing cybersecurity vulnerabilities in digital port systems.
- Emerging hybrid threats (GNSS interference, drones, sabotage).
- Risks linked to foreign control of strategic port infrastructure.



Flagship Actions

Update and revise existing **guidance**, including on emerging threats, and promote a global level playing field for EU ports security.

Building on the work of the European Ports Alliance, establish **frameworks for third-country port assessments** & improve alignment of customs controls across EU ports.

Establish **framework for background checks** for port workers.

Establish a **forum** for Member States' cybersecurity and port authorities to **exchange best practices** & carry out an EU-wide security risk assessment to identify the most pressing cybersecurity risks and appropriate measures to mitigate them.

Recommendations to Member States

- Strengthen port security controls and inspections
- Improve cooperation between ports, customs and law enforcement
- Ensure full implementation of cybersecurity requirements
- Assess security risks related to foreign investments in ports

Pillar IV – Access to Finance & Investment

EU ports face **significant investment needs** (~€80bn) driven by:

- Decarbonisation and energy infrastructure (OPS, clean fuels).
- Growing trade flows and larger vessels.
- Security, resilience & digitalisation
- Climate adaptation & sustainability

A mix of EU, national and private funding, supported by predictable regulatory frameworks and de-risking tools, will be essential.

EU support for port investments

- ❑ Since 2014, the EU has supported port projects with ~€10 billion in deployment funding and €200+ million in R&I.
- ❑ EIB Group has supported port projects with €2.8bn (2014–2025)

The 2026 CEF call prioritised support for onshore power supply (OPS); applications closed on 6 October 2026.



Flagship Actions:

- Set overall **priorities and conditions** for all funding instruments (Annex 1).
- Engagement with **national promotional banks and private investors**.
- Improve **access to financing and project preparation** via EIB.
- Encourage the sector to “**think out of the box**” (by supporting ports to diversify into clean energy, digital and blue tech services – using targeted EU funding, advisory support and PPPs to de-risk innovative projects).

Pillar V – Social cohesion, Skills & Jobs

The green and digital transition will transform port operations. Ensuring **skilled workers, quality jobs and safe working conditions** is essential for the long-term competitiveness and **social sustainability** of EU ports.



Key challenges

- Ports vital for connectivity (arctic, coastal, islands, outermost regions).
- Workforce up-/reskilling for digitalisation, clean energy and alternative fuels.
- Ensuring safe working conditions and quality jobs in port operations.

Flagship Actions

A new **roadmap for competitive small and medium ports** (Annex 2).

Strengthen dialogues and support the development of best practices and guidance on **enhancing port-city relations**.

Support **upskilling and reskilling initiatives**, incl. the development of a skilled next-generation workforce across all blue economy sectors, including ports, through actions under the Blue Generational Renewal Strategy.

Support social partners and relevant stakeholders to establish a **Pact for Skills for the ports sector** on upskilling, reskilling and inclusion of workers.

Prepare **guidance on (i) onboard safety for workers and (ii) safe handling of new fuels**.

Recommendations to Member States

- Support infrastructure, clean energy and fuel, safety, and sustainability improvements for small and medium sized-ports.
- Ensure implementation and respect of Union and national labour legislation and collective bargaining agreements.

Questions?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.