



Questions and answers on the EU Industrial Maritime and Ports Strategies

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Both Strategies

How will the Strategies boost the competitiveness and sustainability of Europe's maritime manufacturing, shipping and port sectors?

The EU Industrial Maritime Strategy strengthens Europe's maritime manufacturing and shipping. It sets out measures to maintain global leadership in high-tech shipbuilding and advanced maritime technologies, as well as to support competitiveness and high-quality maritime transport, while pursuing fair competition internationally. The strategy addresses challenges such as evolving workforce needs, energy transition, and dependence on non-EU suppliers. Through coordinated investment, funding, regulatory initiatives, and skills development, it seeks to foster innovation, simplify administrative processes, and fully leverage Europe's waterborne single market, for the benefit of both maritime manufacturing and the shipping industries.

The EU Ports Strategy positions ports as vital gateways for trade, logistics, energy, and military mobility. To strengthen the long-term competitiveness of EU ports, the Strategy promotes fair competition, regulatory clarity, and investment certainty, benefiting major hubs, small and medium-sized ports, islands, and outermost regions. The Strategy helps ports to be efficient, create jobs, and support Europe's economy. It contributes to reducing environmental impacts and bolstering safety and security. Key sustainability measures include increasing port electrification, clean fuels, and energy efficiency, alongside simplifying environmental permitting.

What are the benefits for Europe's maritime manufacturing, shipping and port sectors?

Maritime manufacturing: The Industrial Maritime Strategy reinforces Europe's leadership in high-tech sustainable and digital solutions for the maritime sector. It fosters decarbonisation, digitalisation, circularity, innovation capacity, and cross-fertilisation between civilian and military production and technologies. The Strategy will support modernisation and upgrading of Europe's maritime production base, leverage public procurement and funding in support of industrial resilience and economic security, help strengthen European value chains, and aim to improve the global level playing field.

Shipping: The EU Industrial Maritime Strategy sets a clear vision for high-quality EU shipping, focusing on innovation, safety, fleet decarbonisation, alternative fuels, digitalisation and automation, as well as simplified procedures. It underscores the importance of promoting EU flags and increasing EU impact at global level. It also supports the testing and scaling of new technologies, which will improve the global competitiveness of EU shipping.

Ports: The EU Ports Strategy supports the sector's long-term planning and technology deployment. The Strategy provides clear frameworks for investment, including EU state aid rules. By supporting port electrification, clean fuels, digitalisation, and improved hinterland connectivity, the Strategy helps reduce operating costs and improves efficiency. It also addresses competition with third countries and foreign ownership and strengthens logistics security.

What are the benefits for citizens?

The two Strategies deliver economic, environmental and social benefits for citizens across Europe. Maritime manufacturing is a cornerstone of regional industrial growth and local

employment driving European high-tech innovation and know-how. Shipping impacts our daily livelihood – it carries 74% of the EU's external trade and 30% of intra-EU freight, as well as 395 million passengers each year. Good connections for islands and outermost regions support territorial cohesion, tourism and local economies, benefiting citizens well beyond port areas. Both Strategies contribute to the creation of quality jobs in Europe. More sustainable port and shipping operations reduce air, water and noise pollution, improving quality of life in port-cities and coastal areas. A robust maritime manufacturing base will enable sustainable and digital waterborne transport and blue economy activities from fishing to offshore renewables and underwater applications. The Strategies also reinforce safety and security standards in maritime operations, reducing risks for passengers and freight. They will also strengthen the critical role of ports, shipping, and maritime manufacturing in food, energy, and digital security. Robust naval, dual-use, and military mobility capabilities will reinforce the defence and security of our continent. They also improve resilience against organised crime, cyber threats, and disruption, boosting public safety and economic stability.

What funding will be available to bridge existing gaps and boost innovation?

The EU Industrial Maritime Strategy aims to mobilise existing EU funding instruments and resources in support of shipbuilding and shipping between 2026 and 2027.

Since 2014, Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) already provided support for different type of vessels and interventions, equal to 220€ million. Through a Connecting Europe Facility call in 2026, the Commission will support the renewal and decarbonisation of the shipping fleet, with a particular focus on ferries and coastal vessels, while fostering domestic manufacturing capacities and EU technology leadership. The 2026 call will also support the deployment of shore-side electricity in ports.

The Innovation Fund has since 2020 supported 13 maritime projects with around 600€ million. Through a dedicated Innovation Fund call, the Commission will further support emissions reduction and advance innovation across the maritime sector in Europe.

To support decarbonisation, the Commission will also consider a dedicated EU mechanism based on ETS allowances for the uptake of sustainable maritime fuels and clean propulsion technologies in the context of the upcoming EU ETS review. It will also encourage Member States to use part of their national ETS budgets in investing in maritime decarbonisation. Member States may also use the different opportunities under Readiness 2030, which aims to mobilise up to 800€ billion in defence spending by 2030 to strengthen naval industrial and technological capabilities.

Under the current Horizon Europe pillar II, for the period 2025- 2027, the programme will make available up to 184.5€ million for the co-programmed European Partnership on Zero Emission Waterborne Transport and collaborative research.

Since 2019, a total 1.1€ billion have been earmarked and committed at EU level to boost naval capabilities, through the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP), Preparatory Action on Defence Research (PADR) and European Defence Fund (EDF) projects. These includes 130€ million available under EDF calls currently open (2026), which will finance project proposals on topics such as enhanced semi-autonomous surface vessels and seabed infrastructure protection.

The proposed European Competitiveness Fund, in tight connection with the future Horizon Europe, subject to the results of the MFF negotiations, could support investments in clean and digitalised vessels, as well as innovation and modernisation in shipbuilding, offshore energy and blue technologies. The Fund could also support collaborative defence research and innovation, industrial scale-up, and the dual use of civilian and military assets. The Commission will also review the EU Sustainable Finance Taxonomy criteria to improve access of the maritime sector to finance and to further incentivise investments in sustainable maritime projects.

The EU Ports Strategy outlines existing EU funding and financial instruments, such as the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), Cohesion policy funds, and the Innovation Fund. It aims to improve EU funding coordination and impact by setting out common principles for all funding instruments. The Strategy also promotes de-risking and blending of funding, better project preparation through technical assistance, and improved coordination between EU and national funding sources. This is particularly important for innovative, first-of-a-kind projects, which need to move

from pilot stage to large-scale deployment. Smaller and medium-sized ports, and investments linked to decarbonisation, security, digitalisation, and resilience also benefit from the measures. In the context of Horizon Europe, the new "Knowledge and Innovation Community" on Water, Marine and Maritime Sectors and Ecosystems, under the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) will integrate ports in the "innovation knowledge triangle" between universities, research institutions and businesses.

How does the Commission ensure the implementation of these Strategies?

The Commission is committed to ensuring effective implementation of the Strategies. Working closely with stakeholders across the broader maritime cluster will be crucial. To this end, the Commission will launch a high-level Maritime Industries and Ports Board, chaired by the responsible Commissioner and Executive Vice Presidents with a view to have a continued exchange on the actions outlined in both the EU Industrial Maritime and Ports strategies, and to collect feedback on developments in the market.

EU Ports Strategy

How does the Strategy address foreign investment risk and strategic dependencies?

The EU's ports remain open to investment from third countries, but this must not result in structural dependencies or risks to European security. The Commission ensures this through horizontal instruments, including the revised Foreign Direct Investment Screening framework, the Foreign Subsidies Regulation, and the EU's broader economic security approach. It foresees additional guidance and criteria for assessing foreign ownership and control of ports, as well as mitigating existing ones. It also proposes a framework to map and monitor foreign investment in EU ports, particularly where ports play a critical role for supply chains, energy security or military mobility.

How is the Commission addressing the increased security threats around EU ports and tackling organised crime?

Building secure and resilient EU ports is central to our collective security. The Strategy reinforces existing frameworks, including maritime security legislation, the Critical Entities Resilience Directive, NIS2 Directive and other cybersecurity acts, as well as operational cooperation through the European Ports Alliance.

Through this Strategy, all ports in the EU will be able to reach a level-playing-field on security measures. This way, criminal networks will not simply seek to switch from one port to another because of different security measures.

The Commission will update guidance on maritime security to reflect emerging threats, such as cyber, drones and hybrid risks. The Commission will also work on the development of an EU framework for background checks for port workers and proposes a framework for non-EU port assessments to detect risks earlier in supply chains, including cargo contamination and drug trafficking. Additionally, an initiative will be launched to support improved digital autonomy of ports and to create an EU-wide maritime and port cyber information-sharing forum. Finally, an EU-wide risk assessment will be carried out to identify the most pressing cybersecurity risks and measures to mitigate them.

What about the EU's outermost regions with remote ports, are there measures to help improve connectivity within the EU? What about small and medium-sized ports?

The Strategy recognises the specific challenges faced by ports in islands, as well as in remote and outermost regions, where maritime links are essential for territorial cohesion and for connecting people and goods. A new roadmap for competitive small and medium-sized ports will highlight their specific needs and bring together available EU funding options, particularly under the Connecting Europe Facility and Cohesion policy funding. The roadmap also refers to specific measures like support

for financial capacity building and project preparation, to be developed by the EIB advisory hub, and the updated rules on Services of General Economic Interest, which will directly support these ports.

EU Industrial Maritime Strategy

How does the Strategy help ensure and maintain Europe's global leadership in high-end maritime manufacturing and shipbuilding?

The EU Industrial Maritime Strategy will leverage decarbonisation, circularity, digitalisation, the emergence of new blue economy segments, military mobility and defence to bolster the EU's maritime industrial base. It will mobilise different tools to support investment, innovation, research and development in maritime manufacturing facilities and improve the global level playing field while ensuring the availability of a skilled workforce.

The ongoing Shipyards of the Future R&I flagship call under Horizon Europe will help foster the digital and circular transformation of European shipyards. It will support the testing and demonstration of innovative technologies with a view to replicating and scaling results.

The launch of the EU Industrial Maritime Value Chain Alliance will strengthen Europe's leadership in selected lead markets in maritime manufacturing and foster industrial synergies across the cluster.

The Commission will also propose pursuing a dual-use ferry construction support mechanism. This will offer opportunities to rebuild domestic industrial capacity in this strategic segment and create a snowball effect for the maritime manufacturing base. The Commission will seek the reinforcement of public-private cooperation under the 2028-2034 Horizon Europe Framework Programme to foster synergies and scale effect between decarbonisation, digitalisation, automation and circularity in the broader waterborne ecosystem. The Commission will also enhance the policy and regulatory framework to foster EU leadership in innovative technologies, such as wind propulsion, nuclear propulsion and autonomous shipping.

How will the Commission help improve the global level playing field for Europe's maritime manufacturing sector?

The Commission aims to improve the global level playing field by focusing on areas where European maritime industry excels, leveraging high-tech capabilities, expertise, and dual-use assets.

The Strategy will leverage public procurement and funding to support EU industrial leadership and economic security, for example through targeted non-price and economic security criteria.

Trade policy tools will be mobilised to help ensure fair competition with third countries, including export credits for ships. The Commission will launch a structured dialogue with the EU maritime manufacturing industry to better detect and identify unfair trade practices in third countries and to inform potential trade measures.

Funding instruments like the Innovation Fund, Horizon Europe, European Defence Fund, European Defence Industry Programme, and the future European Competitiveness Fund will strengthen a resilient and innovative industrial base and maintain the competitiveness of the EU maritime sector.

How does the Commission support the competitiveness of shipping?

The EU Industrial Maritime Strategy sets out actions to boost the competitiveness of EU shipping. These include support to the renewal and decarbonisation of the shipping fleet, promoting safety, simplifying reporting under ETS Maritime and FuelEU Maritime, and reducing administrative burdens. The Community Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport continue to allow Member States to support and strengthen their shipping registers. The Strategy strongly encourages Member States to reuse a part of the national ETS revenues to support the decarbonisation of the waterborne cluster, including in fleet renewal, production and uptake of sustainable fuels, as well as investments in clean marine technologies.

What is the Strategy's approach to maintaining high levels of maritime safety?

Safety remains the key priority of the EU's maritime framework. The Commission will strengthen its engagement with EU Member States at IMO to shape high standards, which will contribute ensuring a global level playing field.

The ageing of the EU-flagged passenger fleet underlines the need to accelerate fleet modernisation. The Commission will review the relevant legislation to adapt the current requirements to the clean and digital transitions.

The achieved high level of maritime safety in EU waters is challenged by the so-called 'shadow fleet', largely composed of ageing vessels under unclear jurisdiction and control. The Commission, with the support of the European Maritime Safety Agency, will work with Member States to strengthen surveillance and monitoring of such operations and improve the enforcement of existing rules.

What steps is the EU taking at the international level?

The Commission, together with Member States, will step up efforts at IMO to develop and adopt global rules on maritime safety, sustainability, and security.

It will promote coordinated trade policy and international partnerships and remains committed to including comprehensive maritime transport commitments in free trade agreements.

The Commission urges Member States to strengthen the EU's strategic global presence to secure continued access to international transport routes.

What measures are proposed to enhance Europe's naval and dual-use shipbuilding industry?

The European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) and the ReArm Europe Plan will help expand naval production, promote interoperable systems and common standards. The Commission encourages Member States to make use of the opportunities offered by EDIP, particularly the possibility of establishing European Defence Projects of Common Interest, including in the areas of maritime domain awareness. The Commission will also propose support for dual-use ferries built in Europe, deployable on strategically important routes.

How does the Strategy help ensure a skilled maritime workforce and the attractiveness of the profession across the EU maritime cluster?

A skilled workforce is essential for the EU maritime sector. The Commission will support reskilling and upskilling to adapt to technological change. It will also promote mobility by creating a network of maritime education and training centers and encouraging greater participation in ERASMUS+. To improve the attractiveness of the sectors, the Commission will work with Member States to strengthen labour standards and social security.

For more information

[Press release](#) - EU Industrial Maritime and Ports Strategies

[Factsheet](#) - EU Ports Strategy

[Factsheet](#) - EU Industrial Maritime Strategy

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