

PORTS

Working Group Recommendations

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1. Final key messages:

Decarbonisation is a strategic priority for the European Union, in line with the European Green Deal, which sets ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving a climate-neutral economy by 2050. Fisheries and aquaculture, as key sectors of the Blue Economy, require an effective energy transition to reduce their environmental footprint while enhancing sustainability, competitiveness, and resilience to climate challenges.

In this context, ports play a central role as enablers of the energy transition in fisheries and aquaculture. They are strategic hubs where logistics, energy infrastructure, technological innovation, and operational management converge. Decarbonising ports contributes not only to direct emissions reductions but also to the creation of clean energy ecosystems, renewable energy generation and storage, optimisation of energy efficiency, and the deployment of innovative solutions for vessels and port operations.

The objective of the Ports Working Group (WG Ports) of the ETP has been to provide the vision, perspective, and expertise of the port sector to contribute to the development of the EU fisheries and aquaculture decarbonisation roadmap, delivering relevant, objective, and constructive input. The group's discussions aimed to reflect the sector perspective on the various strategic topics, identifying challenges, needs, and short-, medium- and long-term solutions.

The key messages presented in this document are the result of work carried out during 2025 by the WG Ports of the ETP, composed of 13 entities representing 8 EU countries (Spain, Portugal, France, Ireland, Bulgaria, Denmark, Italy, and Belgium), ensuring geographical coverage and the ability to provide relevant expertise for the energy transition ambition. The group included representation from most European sea basins, ensuring a comprehensive vision to formulate suggestions for the roadmap towards decarbonisation of fisheries and aquaculture in the EU. Throughout the year, the WG Ports held four virtual meetings, focusing discussions on the following thematic areas: Foresight and ambition goals, Research, innovation & knowledge gaps, Skills & social aspects, Finance and business environment, Regulatory framework, and Data and monitoring.

| Meeting | Date | Location | Main points of discussion | Nb of Participants |
|----------------------------------|---|----------|--|--------------------|
| 1 st WG Ports Meeting | 04-Feb 2025, 10:00-12:00 (Brussels time) | Online | 1. Introduction to the Energy Transition Partnership and Objectives 2. Participant Introductions 3. Brainstorming Discussion 4. Work Plan 5. Cross-cutting Topics for Collaboration with Other Working Groups | 26 |
| 2 nd WG Ports Meeting | 18 March 2025, 10:00-12:00, (Brussels time) | Online | 1. Land/Sea discretisation in port operations 2. Analysis of land operations to be decarbonised 3. Main technologies/solutions for decarbonisation of selected operations | 13 |
| 3 rd WG Ports Meeting | 18 June 2025, 10:00-12:00 (Brussels time) | Online | 1. Review of Shipbuilding SG outcomes 2. Developing a matrix of operations and solutions for decarbonising Ports 3. Discussion on port adaptation to maritime decarbonisation technologies: challenges, barriers & opportunities | 10 |
| 4 th WG Ports Meeting | 08-Sep 2025, 12:00-14:00 (Brussels time) | Online | Validation of the final recommendations of the WG Ports | 15 |

As a result, a series of **recommended actions** have been identified to be included in the roadmap from the ports perspective, taking into account the diverse realities of ports (size, operations, needs, and context). These actions have been grouped into:

- **9 priority recommendations specific** to the ports segment.
- **7 common and cross-cutting recommendations** applicable to all ETP segments.

These recommendations synthesise sector knowledge and aim to provide a practical and actionable framework to advance the energy transition in EU fisheries and aquaculture.

Key Messages for Port segment:

- I. Baseline and monitoring system: Include in the roadmap the need for developing a harmonised EU methodology for ports to measure energy consumption, emissions, waste, and water use. The development of this methodology, which should take into account the work currently being carried out and integrate good practices on harmonisation and surveillance, must be supported by an EU-funded program providing technical assistance and co-financed digital tools for annual reporting. This methodology should be established at the early stage of the roadmap implementation, taking into consideration the mandate of the European Commission.

- II. Onshore Power Supply (OPS) implementation: Financially and technically support the deployment of OPS in all EU fishing ports by 2030, aiming to ensure that at least 60% of them have OPS systems, through:
 - a. Launching a European programme (such as Horizon or Interreg) to develop and implement a pilot project in one fishing port in each sea basin.
 - b. Developing a baseline assessment on the consumption and production of electricity and renewable energy in fishing port activities (port capacities and needs), financed and coordinated through a dedicated EU call for tenders.
 - c. Establishing minimum and common technical standards.
 - d. Creating specific EU funding lines to co-finance OPS infrastructure in small (<5K t/year) and medium (5K–20K t/year) ports.
 - e. Financially supporting incentive schemes such as reduced port fees or preferential electricity tariffs for connected vessels.
- III. Electrification of port equipment and logistics: Establish an EU co-financing program to replace diesel-powered equipment (forklifts, trucks, cranes) with electric or hybrid alternatives, complemented by a European joint procurement mechanism to reduce costs for small ports.
- IV. Renewable energy production and storage in ports: Facilitate/Encourage EU-financially supported pilot projects (through calls) and/or co-financed investments (i.e EIB, CEF) to facilitate the integration of solar, wind, and battery storage systems into port operations, prioritising refrigeration and ice plants.
- V. Circular economy and waste management: Promote EU-funded waste-sorting infrastructure and support valorisation initiatives for fish by-products (omega-3, collagen, animal feed) and recycling of materials (polystyrene, plastics, oils) through a European platform of port circular economy projects, encouraging inter- and intra- regional cooperation, both between different regions or Member States of the EU and among local actors within the same territory, while linking these actions to research and innovation to ensure knowledge-based solutions.
- VI. Water efficiency and wastewater treatment: Provide EU financial support for wastewater treatment plants in fishing ports, encourage the reuse of treated water for port operations (cleaning, cooling), and establish EU funding calls to fund pilot projects for energy production from wastewater.
- VII. Energy renovation of port buildings: Create a dedicated EU fund for upgrading high-energy consumption port buildings (fish markets, cold storage halls), linking the access to more efficient energy sources to measurable efficiency improvements such as kWh/m² reduction.
- VIII. Social integration and skills: Promote EU-funded training and exchange programmes for port workers, ensuring gender equality and inclusivity. Encourage the establishment of pilot innovation centres or living labs in ports for the development of energy and decarbonisation solutions, facilitating community engagement and co-design of solutions. Support the attraction of younger generations to blue economy jobs through EU funding calls, and include social acceptance, gender equality and inclusivity criteria in all

EU-funded port energy projects synergies with local authorities and communities and adopting a cross-cutting approach that links energy transition with urban planning, the blue economy, and community engagement.

2. Common Messages:

- IX. Harmonised regulatory framework: Better align and streamline regulations across ports, fisheries, aquaculture, and shipbuilding to facilitate common renewable energy infrastructure deployments and avoid contradictions.
- X. EU-level financial incentives: Establish a dedicated EU fund with specific and competitive calls for decarbonisation of maritime, aquaculture and fisheries fleets, supporting OPS, renewable energy development (incl. fuels), electrification, and circular economy projects.
- XI. Tailored financial support: Adapt and streamline EU financial instruments and aid schemes to the specific realities and needs of each sector (ports, fisheries, aquaculture, shipbuilding), recognising their different scales, technologies, and investment capacities. As a specific action, finance EU-level feasibility and test-case studies on decarbonisation to identify realistic pathways, technical requirements, and investment needs in each sector, including the use of innovative financial mechanisms such as green bonds, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and other tailored funding instruments.
- XII. Visibility of funding opportunities: Improve the visibility, communication, and accessibility of existing EU funding programmes for decarbonisation by creating a centralised EU digital platform dedicated to Blue Economy decarbonisation projects, where all calls and funds (EMFAF, CEF, Horizon, Interreg, etc.) are compiled, with a simple search function and sector-specific fact sheets, particularly simplifying access and participation for smaller ports.
- XIII. Cooperation and networks: Strengthen and encourage cooperation between ports, shipbuilders, fishers, aquaculture operators, NGOs, and researchers through EU-supported collaborative networks and regional clusters. This cooperation should also be economically incentivised through EU-funding mechanisms (calls, assistance mechanisms, etc.)
- XIV. Skills development: Launch an EU-wide training initiative on renewable technologies, energy efficiency, and circular economy, accessible across all segments of the fisheries and aquaculture value chain.
- XV. Knowledge transfer and international cooperation: Support, financially and in terms of governance, knowledge exchange between European fishing ports and smaller EU or developing-country ports through twinning programmes and technical assistance and create an EU-level repository of cross-sectoral best practices in decarbonisation applicable to all Blue Economy sectors.