

CONFERENCE

17.09.2026

De Doelen, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Ports in Transition: Building Resilient Ecosystems

Final learnings from MAGPIE & PIONEERS projects



PIONEERS



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement 101036594 and 101037564 (MFF 2014-2020).

Ports in Transition: Building Resilient Ecosystems

Press Release: Europe's ports get a free, tested roadmap to net zero



Rotterdam, 17 September 2026 - The EU-funded Horizon 2020 projects PIONEERS and MAGPIE closed five years of work today with a concrete outcome: a Green Port Master Plan delivered to the European Commission, and free digital tools that let any European port, not only the 90 partners in the two consortia, apply what was tested.

Launched under the European Green Deal, PIONEERS and MAGPIE spent five years testing solutions for clean energy, alternative fuels, electrification, digitalisation and infrastructure in real port operations. PIONEERS, coordinated by the Port of Antwerp-Bruges together with the ports of Barcelona, Venlo and Constanța, ran 19 demonstrations spanning clean energy, digital innovation and sustainable port design. MAGPIE, coordinated by the Port of Rotterdam, tested 14 solutions across the same themes with its own partner ports, HAROPA PORT, Sines & DeltaPort.

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Both projects have now packaged their results into tools any port can use. PIONEERS' Green Port Master Plan [Handbook Explorer](#) offers a free, five-step method, covering a port's current footprint, its 2050 vision, outside pressures, proven innovations and a roadmap, plus a carbon-footprint methodology and a test to identify a port's main barriers to transition. MAGPIE's [Green Innovation Compass](#) is an open knowledge platform that brings together knowledge of innovative technologies, operational concepts and digital solutions that can support the transformation of ports and port-related logistics. Together, they form the practical core of the Green Port Master Plan handed to the Commission.

"Five years of PIONEERS have shown that technologies exist, knowledge exists, and the partnership exists too. The challenge now is to scale what works across Europe," said Rob Smeets, CEO of the Port of Antwerp-Bruges. He argued that testing alone is not enough: ports now need to tackle the regulatory, financial and organisational barriers around each innovation, and to act as orchestrators bringing industry, energy, logistics and government together.

"Europe needs to bring innovations from pilots to practice faster. MAGPIE shows how this can be done through structured European collaboration," said Boudewijn Siemons, CEO of the Port of Rotterdam. He was direct about the limits of the current model: the EU, he said, cannot be expected to keep funding innovation programmes like these indefinitely, and ports need new ways- including a look at EU financial-market regulation - to draw private and corporate capital into port innovation.

The European policy perspective was underlined by Han ten Broeke, Head of Cabinet to European Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra, who opened the conference, and by Isabelle Ryckbost, Secretary General of the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO): *"The world is in transition: ports have to operate in a rapidly changing climate and a turbulent geoeconomic and geopolitical global environment. This calls for new thinking on how the port ecosystem can strengthen its resilience."*



Figure 1 Messrs. Siemons, ten Broeke, and Smeets.

The afternoon's five Learning Labs - on competitiveness and digitalisation, energy transition, port security, access to finance, and social cohesion - mirrored the five pillars of the EU Ports Strategy, adopted by the European Commission in March 2026, and tested how these lessons translate into practice across ports, cities and industry.

With the Master Plan and its tools now public, PIONEERS and MAGPIE leave a legacy that can help ports across Europe make the transition to greener and more resilient operations and, in doing so, shape the future of Europe.

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