

Note-taking template

Theme	Theme 4 – Access to Finance & Investment	Round	1 & 2
Room	Willem Burger (conference room)	Note-taker	Chatarina Salim
Facilitator	Gunnar Platz	Date	17 September 2026
Experts <i>names and organisations as they should appear in print</i>	Esther Poortstra (ZES) & Thiago Tavares (CINEA)		
Approx. headcount	35 (round 1) & 20 (round 2)	Sector mix <i>port authorities, terminals, shippers, technology providers, public authorities, researchers</i>	

1. How the facilitator framed the prompt

One or two lines only. Note whether the prompt was reframed or narrowed.

Access to finance: if we have more support, we can implement the solution more. But doubt that it is the truth. Is it all about money? We have many instruments available to get financial support; for some reason, it is not enough. With M+P projects, we develop the solution; what are the next steps?

What if we redesign how we finance innovation: Would green port transitions finally gain speed?

2. Quotes

Three to five per round. Mark clearly if a speaker asked not to be quoted or not to be named, and flag any wording you are unsure of so it can be checked.

Speaker	Organisation	Statement – as close to their own words as possible
Esther	ZES	Best practices in terms of financing are financing the value chain. Our organisation finance the value chain money in inland sailing. We are facing systems change, we facing it together, all actors should be involved. We need all actors in the value chain to move together. What really helps is to get through the transition of the valley of death for scaling up the network and the infrastructure, to go to an economically viable system. Part of that lies in the nature of the system of the inland shipping sector. They sail emission-free on batteries. They charge at inland ports. Vessels have a long lifetime. Here we need to work on the existing fleet; we cannot wait for all fleets to be renewed. And that is expensive both on the retrofit and operational sides. What would help? (1) We need a level playing field. Vessels of battery need to pay taxes. (2) We need operational help; sectors or companies need to be helped to sail emissions-free. To create operational subsidies. On the infrastructure side, the Netherlands suffers from grid congestion, and operational costs for grid connection are rising. (3) We need

		banks to look differently at green & sustainable investment. It is expensive for vessels being prepared to sail. Adjust banks the look on the way to green investments, to look at long-term. Banks look at retrofitting vessels as a risky investment. The actual risk for banks to have portfolio to sail on alternative fuels in the next seven-eight years. The real issue in inland shipping sector is the lack of EU & national policy. Policy is going to create demand for zero-emission sailing.
		Q: The age of the shipowners; if it took 20 years, then there might be differences. The ports or sector are not really aware of what is going on. What is needed for the banks to look differently? A (Esther): Both attitude and investment scheme. State guarantees to lower the risk profile. Don't look at today but look a bit further.
		Q: What are the biggest financial hurdles? A (Esther): Subsidies or money granted in the Netherlands cannot be used outside the Netherlands. Our inland vessels stop sailing at the border; for example, we want to make a green corridor on the route to Belgium, then we need to develop charging stations along the way. However, securing funds outside the Netherlands is difficult because different countries have different budgets and priorities.
Thiago	CINEA	Technology is there and has been improving, there are committed partners, pilots have been demonstrated, so how can we scale? Why don't we make this normal in a port, shipyard, transport system? In CINEA, we look at many investment projects: what are the results, and how much can be implemented. We have problems with connected facilities and innovation funds; what we see as obstacles when participating in innovation: after the project finishes, we get the grant, turning the mentality into taking it as an incentive. Risk sharing is a good way to move forward, but how do we accelerate it? The challenges are we have specific milestones and cannot replace the long-term, in reality what we do is de-risking certain investment. Change mindset from ground to incentive mentality. What makes differences in projects that are fail and success, the approaches in pilots. How you create the ecosystem, how to support moving forward. Give the additional push that they need until the final moment they can fly along: once it is getting mature, the market is picking up, and investments. In practice, we need to see what is needed for deployment, data framework, business case, procurement stages, financing stages, and regulatory and operational barriers to support the first movers. Horizon is a place to try things, if you identify which one to make additional push, the one that can be put on the

		market. Able to capture the good ones and support them to move forward.
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3. What participants said would actually change

The direct answers to the "what if..." question.

Q: How to fund these innovative requests?

A (Thiago): Focus on the users, be clear in your mind about who it will be for. Who is your target and for whom you are adding value.

Q: But it is challenging to convince people to join

A (Thiago): Finance most of it, take the risks. Think about how we can adapt the process to give more support towards the transitions.

Q: How profitable projects, for example, like inland mobility, compare to others?

A (Esther): Battery sailing is currently not profitable; it will be in ten years, but we need to get it scaled with funds. Building a whole new ecosystem. We need to get it scaled, otherwise it will not get competitive.

A (Thiago): Support the early adopters to push it forward, similar to EV at the beginning: there is lots of support; at some point, more charging stations, then support goes down.

Q: They all use subsidies to grow to move to scale; can we pull up ten-twenty vessels to apply for finance in the bank? The bank feedback is twofold: restructuring finance; come to vessels to retrofit that have been appreciated in their lifecycle. The conservative way of looking at inland shipping sectors. Calculate the cash flow back to the line to finish the product, invest in parts that are not bankable by the bank.

A (Thiago): It is a stick and a carrot situation, in which the stick is the regulations like ETS that are making it difficult for people not following the transition; how to create demand when nobody wants to pay more for the emissions they create. The stick becomes a carrot; more people comply, more money to invest. How to make early adopters to move on until they can get on their own feet. The keyword is patience.

Q: How difficult are cross-border operations between the EU and the UK, and what are the threats?

A (Esther): Currently, we don't do the UK specifically; now the operations are across the North Sea. For the UK, we need to "start all over," from securing funding to finding the right partners. See guidance from the previous effort in Belgium and Germany. Now it is becoming easier since we know how to play the game.

Q: At the European level, it seems to be lacking; how to develop demos and solutions further?

A (Thiago): See what ecosystem I need, for example hydrogen carrier. Ports in projects have around 30 solutions together but don't think that even one solution is tested across different aspects. A more focused better than the more amounts. Start with the problem and where you can test the thing.

Q: For Horizon, do you have the capability to outline all steps to look at the future of all commercial going to work? Having several testings it difficult to smaller companies. Support smaller organisations is needed to come back to the competitions.

A (Thiago): For SMEs and startups, Horizon is not the best entry point for startups. What we see on our side, the problem owners have contact with SMEs to facilitate the problem. To make it a bit straightforward and less descriptive, define clear connection what trying to do and what are the impacts. Pre commercial procurement, startup can get more scenario. Redesign and set your target.

Q: There are lots of discussions on climate change but for example, today I see no discussion on 6 bridge boundaries. If the personal value are focus on how do we hold or reverse ecological breakdown, how do you use finance while we continue to grow?

A (Thiago): Combine and get the evidence to decide how to move forward. Generate the movement through events like today to get others' opinions. Research & innovation and grab as many as people possible to change.

A (Esther): Change the mindset, the behaviour. In the end, we need behaviour change

Q: How to actually change the business model and where the business lies, what are your perspectives?
 A (Esther): Need to see the money differently
 A (Thiago): Understand the target, who would really pay for a more expensive vessel since it is electric. Really understand who is willing to pay to support your business. Open calls where people can apply.

4. Preconditions named

What the room said would have to be in place first – standards, data governance, funding structures, a mandate somebody is willing to hold.

Excessive risk was the biggest factor in what slows down green port investment most today. The second was complex procedures, while the availability of funds and lack of capacity of applicants were the lowest factors chosen.

5. Barriers raised

Type of barrier	What was raised, and by whom
Regulatory	- Lack of EU and national policy to create demand for zero-emission inland shipping (Esther) - Cross-border differences in funding schemes (Esther)
Financial	- Banks perceive retrofitting vessels as a risky investment (Esther) - Both retrofit and operational costs of zero-emission inland vessels are high (Esther)
Governance and organisational	Difficulty getting the right people to join collaborative initiatives (Thiago)
Data and digital	The need for a data framework when transitioning projects toward deployment (Thiago)
Skills and labour	n.a.
Other	Current funding programmes are not an easy entry point for SMEs and start-ups (raised by anonymised participant, addressed by Thiago)

6. Concrete examples

Ports, companies, projects, instruments and figures named – with enough detail to be verifiable afterwards.

Support early adopters.

State guarantees for vessel financing.

Pre-commercial procurement as an alternative to provide start-ups or SMEs with more opportunities.

7. Explicit asks of the EU or of national regulators

Specific, and attributable where possible.

A level playing field for zero-emission vessels.

Policy in inland shipping to create demand for zero-emission sailing.

Improve cross-border alignment of funding schemes.

Operational support for zero-emission sailing.

Adapt public funding process to give more support towards the transitions.

8. Disagreements

Who disagreed with whom, and on what. Record both positions rather than a compromise.

Esther (ZES) disagreed with a participant (anonymised at their request) regarding the roles of subsidy as a financing mechanism. The participant mentioned that subsidy disrupts the free market. Esther argued that what is really lacking is demand, and how do you get demand.

9. Questions the facilitator or experts could not resolve

n.a.

10. Room dynamics

Did the discussion converge or fragment? Did one or two voices dominate? Was the mix broad or concentrated in one part of the sector?

The discussion converged; lots of different voices raised questions or gave opinions. Concentrated in the funding for innovation projects.

11. Comparison with the other round

Complete after Round 2. Points prominent in Round 1 that were absent, contested or reversed in Round 2 – and points both rounds reached independently.

Both rounds reached the conclusion of the points raised independently. The discussion was on the flow from one participant to the others.

12. Priority points for each output

Completed at the end of the session, so that the people writing up the material do not have to make this judgement for you.

For the EU position paper – policy and regulatory implications, EU-level asks, barriers recurring across ports, points of convergence

For the session report and newsletters – practice examples, participant experience, illustrative anecdotes, atmosphere