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Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas
on behalf of the European Commission
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The EU Ports Strategy¹ sets out a coherent framework to strengthen the competitiveness of EU maritime and inland ports. Northern Germany's sea and inland ports are vital gateways for international trade, facilitating the movement of goods across Europe and acting as crucial hubs for economic activities and regional development.

1. The strategy aims to boost the competitiveness, resilience, sustainability and security of European ports. It includes sustainability measures to increase port electrification, clean fuels and energy efficiency, alongside simplifying environmental permitting. In terms of EU support, the strategy outlines available instruments², and points to support by the European Investment Bank. Depending on local needs and priorities Member States will also be able to make use of e.g. part of Emission Trading System revenues for maritime decarbonisation projects and funds available for implementing the future national and regional partnership plans. Furthermore, the review of the General Block Exemption Regulation³ will assess the potential to clarify and simplify State aid rules.

2. The strategy recognises the importance of efficient port operations and hinterland connections. The future action plan on Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) will contribute to the integration of Northern Germany's ports in the EU transport and logistics networks.

3. Among its actions, the strategy envisages promoting the upskilling and reskilling of port workers by supporting the establishment of a dedicated skills partnership for the ports sector and the development of a skilled next-generation workforce across all blue economy sector under the Blue Generational Renewal Strategy.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52026DC0112&qid=1772790216221>.

² Such as the Connecting Europe Facility, the European Competitiveness Fund, the future Horizon Europe 2028-2034.

³ https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/state-aid/gber-review_en#:~:text=On%2025%20February%202026%20the,new%20General%20Block%20Exemption%20Regulation.