The Blue Supply Chains grand finale: driving climate action

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The final conference of the Blue Supply Chains (BSC) project, themed *Decarbonising Port Operations & Supply Chains: Insights from the Blue Supply Chains Project*, was held as part of the Baltic Ports for Climate Conference – organized by the Baltic Ports Organization (one of the project partners) and hosted by the Port of Gdynia in mid-November 2025.

This conclusive session focused on the critical need to speed up the energy transition in the maritime sector, recognizing that 80% of the EU's trade relies on maritime transport, which still uses conventional fossil fuels for over 99% of its energy consumption.

Hunter Reinhardt (Interreg EU Baltic Sea Region Programme 2021-2027) shared insights into his organization's mission: the commitment to fostering transnational cooperation and cohesive development across the shared region. Crucially, Interreg is dedicated to making port operations greener through the promotion of electrification, alternative fuels, and eco-friendly transport networks – as exemplified by Blue Supply Chains, one of the Programme's Core Projects (with a budget of €4.6 million).

Energy transition remains critical, encompassing the shift from fossil fuels to renewable sources such as wind, solar, bio and hydrogen, and serving transport needs through green and energy-efficient modes like shipping or rail (or the combination of the two as investigated & promoted by BSC in their works on the rail ferries connecting Germany and Sweden). Reinhardt underlined, "Maritime transport is at the heart of our region's identity and economy, and is – to my eyes – inherently transnational. By bringing together partners from across the Baltic Sea region, initiatives like Blue Supply Chains, supported by the EU through Interreg, can drive genuine progress toward decarbonizing shipping and strengthening sustainable supply chains."

Next was Sami Vesterinen (EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, PA Ship) who highlighted the urgent need for decarbonization in the maritime sector, responsible for approximately 3.0-4.0% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the EU. Driven by the block's goal for net-zero emissions by 2050, new regulations – such as FuelEU Maritime, inclusion of shipping in the EU ETS, and the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation – are guiding the transition. This effort concentrates on low-carbon fuels, energy efficiency, and clean port infrastructure (including onshore power supply). Ports are considered frontrunners in this decarbonization movement. "Decarbonizing maritime transport is one of the key priorities of EUSBSR PA Ship in making the maritime sector more sustainable," Vesterinen underscored. "The transnational efforts of the Blue Supply Chains project have been invaluable in transforming the holistic transport chain within ports across the region. The cooperation between PA Ship and Blue Supply Chains has been excellent from the very beginning, and PA Ship looks forward to further opportunities for collaboration. Even after the project completion, PA Ship will continue to disseminate the successful results achieved by Blue Supply Chains."

The project was structured around various complex pilot actions developed in parallel by partners from eight European countries. Consequently, panelists of Blue Supply Chains' closing conference – from the IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute, Ventspils High Technology Park, Gdynia Container Terminal, Stena Line, Klaipėda Science and Technology Park, and the Port of Skagen – shared their diverse insights into the project's numerous activities and pilot programmes. They discussed, among many, addressing GHG emission reduction from port operations through electrification (among others, by the implementation of cold ironing systems and exploring retrofitting options for yard cranes), plus devising a manual for the electrification process; creating a national strategy for the production, handling, and bunkering of fossil-free fuels (toward establishing Europe's first green inland waterways transport corridor on the Nemunas River, combined with the development of an electric pusher boat); developing roadmaps for providing green energy to heavy-duty transport actors such as shipping lines; and how better stakeholder cooperation can help in setting up green transport chains.

Blue Supply Chains and its rich consortium (20 partners from eight EU BSR countries) aimed to aid port authorities and operators in the Baltic, actively supporting the decarbonization of port & shipping operations by advancing electrification, providing strategies for alternative fuels, and establishing green transport chains. Although seaports were, are, and will continue to offer

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strategic infrastructure – their climate role will profoundly change: from sources of pollution to enablers of decarbonization (their own as well as of port users, on- & offshore). The project's overall mission was – and its legacy is – to turn ports into valuable assets in the transition toward zero-emission operations and green fuels, thereby meeting the ambitious EU climate change targets.

All interested stakeholders are encouraged to **visit the official project website** for more information about its many pilot projects and activities. The autumn of 2025 issue of the Baltic Transport Journal hosted a BSC-dedicated column, featuring reads with key takeaways from Blue Supply Chain's **Umeå** and **Lithuanian** roadmaps (on the provision of future green fuels in ports and commercially greening inland waterways cargo traffic, respectively), and on the **Rostock-Trelleborg sea-rail shortcut to cleaner trade**. ■