



# MARKET INSIGHTS

## Commission adopts 1 billion Euro Pact for the Ocean to protect marine life and strengthen the blue economy

*The European Ocean Pact begins its journey in a context marked by environmental urgency, regulatory pressure, and fragmentation in maritime governance. Its adoption in June 2025, accompanied by an initial investment of €1 billion, reflects the European Commission's commitment to establishing a common framework for the protection of the marine environment and the sustainable development of the blue economy.*

*This new pact comes at a time of increasing stress on ocean ecosystems, with indicators such as sea temperature, overfishing, and plastic pollution reaching historic highs. At the same time, regulatory pressure on sectors such as maritime transport, industrial fishing, and offshore energy is intensifying, along with growing expectations for transparency, environmental innovation, and regulatory compliance.*

*On an operational level, ports and maritime stakeholders will need to adapt to new requirements, but they will also gain access to unprecedented financing and cooperation instruments. Nevertheless, the pact's lack of legal enforceability and the tensions among Member States pose significant implementation challenges.*

*In this scenario, the key will lie in the ability of public and private actors to anticipate change, integrate into strategic projects, and position themselves within regional and European networks of influence.*

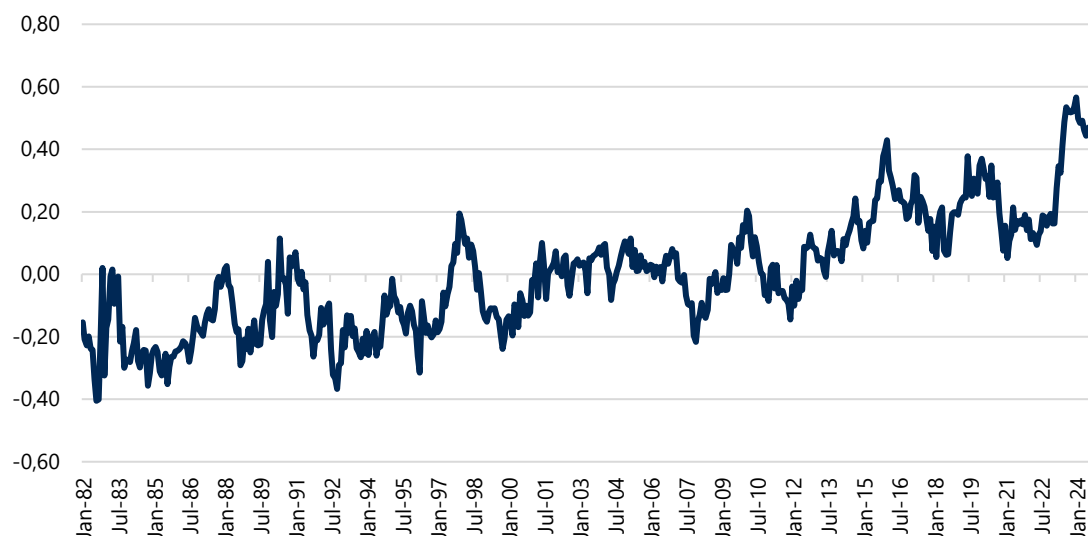
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### Analysis of the Fundación Valenciaport

The ocean covers more than **70% of the Earth's surface** and constitutes a fundamental pillar for life on the planet. However, it is currently facing a **critical situation**. Overfishing, pollution, rising water temperatures, acidification, and the loss of marine biodiversity are undermining its ability to sustain healthy ecosystems, provide vital resources, and function as a **climate regulator**.

Within the framework of the global and **European climate agenda**, the ocean plays a key role. It absorbs approximately one-quarter of the carbon dioxide emitted by human activity, produces more than half of the oxygen we breathe, and regulates extreme weather events. At the same time, it supports the so-called **blue economy**, which includes sectors such as maritime transport, fisheries, offshore renewable energy, and coastal tourism—activities that are essential to millions of people and coastal communities across Europe. Graph 1 shows the **evolution of average ocean temperatures** over recent decades, a clear **indicator of the increasing pressure** on marine ecosystems at a global scale.

Graph 1. Global sea surface temperature monthly anomalies (°C)



Source: Copernicus

In this context, European institutions have intensified their **commitment to marine environmental protection**. The recent adoption of the **European Ocean Pact** represents a key evolution towards a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient governance model.

This new pact is part of a **progressive development of key initiatives** that have shaped the ocean agenda at various levels. From global commitments such as the 2030 Agenda to regional strategies focused on the Mediterranean, these frameworks have contributed to generating knowledge, mobilizing resources, and establishing common priorities.

Table 1 lists some of the **main prior initiatives** that have served as references or conceptual foundations for the design of the European Ocean Pact, also indicating their geographical scope.

Table 1. Main previous initiatives linked to ocean governance

Initiative	Year Validity	Geographical scope	Key elements	Relationship to the Pact
<b>EU Mission: Restoring oceans and waters</b>	2021–2030	European Union (with focus on sea basins)	Ecological restoration, blue innovation, regional lighthouses	Technical and methodological basis. Link with Horizon Europe
<b>ODS 14 – Underwater life (Agenda 2030)</b>	2015	Global	Conservation, pollution control, international cooperation	Ethical and global framework. It inspires the objectives of the pact
<b>EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030</b>	2020	European Union	Protection of 30% of seas, restriction on trawling	Environmental precedent. Introduces debate on binding measures
<b>BBNJ Treaty (high seas)</b>	2023	Global (international waters)	Marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction	Complements European action in international waters

Initiative	Year Validity	Geographical scope	Key elements	Relationship to the Pact
<b>Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP)</b>	Since 1976	Regional (Mediterranean basin)	Pollution prevention, biodiversity, marine litter	Regional benchmark for the Western Mediterranean
<b>BlueMed Initiative</b>	Since 2015	Regional (Mediterranean)	Blue economy, marine innovation, port participation	Platform for cooperation and experimentation, particularly relevant for Valenciaport

Source: Own elaboration based on EU institutional documents, UN and Mediterranean Action Plan.

The recent adoption of the **European Ocean Pact** represents a decisive step in consolidating a model that promotes sustainability, inclusive growth, and environmental resilience in the maritime space. This initiative establishes a **common framework** that strengthens European ocean policies and aims to advance sustainable, coordinated, and inclusive management of maritime areas.

The Pact serves as a **governance tool** designed to mobilize all actors connected to the ocean. Its goal is to foster a **shared commitment** around **three main priorities**: protecting the health of marine ecosystems, promoting a competitive blue economy, and improving the quality of life in coastal and maritime areas.

Its official launch took place on **June 5, 2025, in Brussels**, within the framework of the **Ministerial Conference on the Ocean and European Waters Mission**. This initiative aligns with other key European Union strategies, such as the Green Deal, the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, and the Atlantic Maritime Agenda, representing a strong step towards greater integration of European marine policies.

Beyond the political sphere, the Pact aims to become an **operational instrument capable of connecting** initiatives, facilitating financing, and accelerating the implementation of measures in the areas of marine sustainability, blue innovation, and territorial resilience.

The European Ocean Pact defines an **ambitious roadmap structured around six main areas of action**. All of them are focused on strengthening marine environmental protection, promoting sustainable growth in blue sectors, and ensuring the prosperity of coastal communities. The primary objectives are organized around the following priorities:

1. **Protect and restore marine ecosystems:** significant improvements in biodiversity in seas and oceans are promoted through the expansion of marine protected areas, pollution reduction, and the restoration of key habitats.
2. **Strengthen the sustainable blue economy:** the pact supports an economic model that combines innovation, competitiveness, and sustainability in sectors such as maritime transport, offshore renewable energy, fisheries, and aquaculture.

3. **Promote more integrated and participatory ocean governance:** the goal is to improve coordination across different levels of government, encourage cross-border collaboration, and facilitate the active participation of local and regional stakeholders.
4. **Increase knowledge and monitoring of the marine environment:** ocean observation systems, open data access, digitalization, and scientific projects are promoted to enable more informed and effective decision-making.
5. **Reinforce the social and territorial dimension of the ocean:** the Pact acknowledges the central role of coastal communities, islands, and outermost regions, and promotes measures to improve their resilience and social cohesion.
6. **Boost international action for ocean protection:** the EU seeks to lead global efforts for a healthy ocean by supporting international governance, multilateral commitments, and cooperation with third countries.

These six areas are designed to be **complementary**, connecting local, national, and European actions under a common approach. The Pact acts both as a **catalyst for existing initiatives** and as a **driver for new investments, strategic alliances, and pilot projects** throughout the European maritime space.

However, despite its strategic nature and declared ambition, the European Ocean Pact has been met with reservations by some scientific, social, and environmental sectors, which point out several limitations in its formulation and implementation. The main challenges identified are described below:

- **Non-binding measures:** One of the most criticized aspects of the Pact is its lack of legal force. Unlike a European directive or regulation, the Pact is presented as a political guidance document, without normative character or mandatory compliance mechanisms. This raises doubts about its real capacity to produce structural changes in sectors such as industrial fishing, deep-sea mining, or maritime transport. In the absence of binding measures, its effectiveness will largely depend on the political will of Member States and social pressure.
- **Pressure from fishing lobbies:** Various non-governmental organizations have pointed out the influence of fishing sector lobbies on the final drafting of the pact. In particular, there have been complaints about the weakening of certain commitments related to the gradual ban of bottom trawling in marine protected areas, a practice considered highly destructive to seabeds. These tensions reflect an underlying conflict between ecological sustainability and short-term economic interests.
- **Regional implementation difficulties:** Another major challenge lies in the effective application of the pact at regional and local levels. The European maritime space is highly diverse, with notable differences between regions such as the Baltic, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the outermost regions. This heterogeneity complicates policy coordination and may create asymmetries in

implementation, especially in territories with lower technical or financial capacity. The lack of specific territorial support instruments reinforces this risk.

- **NGOs' calls for greater ambition and oversight:** Numerous environmental NGOs, such as BLOOM, Oceana, and ClientEarth, have urged the European Commission to raise the pact's ambition and equip it with clear mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and implementation. They demand a roadmap with quantifiable targets, concrete deadlines, and binding commitments, as well as the creation of an accountability system including periodic reports and civil society participation. These demands reflect fears that the pact may become a statement of intent without real effects.

### *Ports in the Blue Transition: Implications and Recommendations*

The **European Ocean Pact** outlines a transformative scenario for the entire European port system. Far from acting as mere logistical hubs, ports today are key players in the transition towards a **more sustainable, digitalized, and resilient blue economy**. This new vision brings both responsibilities and opportunities.

One of the main challenges will be **adapting port operations** to more **demanding environmental standards**. Emission reduction, improved waste management, protection of coastal habitats, and the incorporation of nature-based solutions are now key elements to ensure management aligned with the pact's principles. This adaptation will require **significant investments** but will also deliver tangible benefits in efficiency, institutional reputation, and regulatory compliance.

At the same time, the pact opens the door to a new generation of **financing linked to the sustainable blue economy**. European programs such as Horizon Europe, LIFE, and BlueInvest offer concrete opportunities to fund projects focused on technological innovation, energy efficiency, clean mobility, or environmental regeneration in port areas. In this context, it is crucial that ports **actively seek funding and form consortiums**, collaborating with public and private partners to maximize their chances of access.

Moreover, the pact **reinforces** the importance of **regional cooperation**, especially in basins like the Mediterranean, where pressure on the marine ecosystem is particularly intense. Ports that actively integrate into platforms such as BlueMed, the Barcelona Convention, or the Union for the Mediterranean will gain access to resources, exchange best practices, and position themselves as regional leaders in maritime sustainability.

This new approach also offers ports the opportunity to assume **strategic leadership** in ocean diplomacy and sustainability, promoting **partnerships** with research centers, NGOs, coastal authorities, and multilateral organizations. To consolidate this leadership, it is advisable to define a clear institutional position that highlights commitment to the blue transition in corporate strategies, sustainability plans, and public communication.

Finally, it is essential to **promote** the development of **pilot cases** that serve as applied innovation laboratories. Initiatives in areas such as **sustainable port logistics, marine circular economy, environmental digitalization, or energy integration** can not only improve port operations but also generate transferable knowledge to other territories. These experiences demonstrate adaptability, attract investment, and strengthen the European projection of ports.

Overall, the European Ocean Pact represents a strategic opportunity for ports willing to go beyond compliance and become active agents of the blue transformation in Europe.

### *Examples of Best Practices Aligned with the Ocean Pact*

Across Europe—and internationally—various ports are implementing innovative initiatives in **sustainability, decarbonization, and environmental governance**. These exemplary cases not only demonstrate the technical feasibility of the transformations outlined in the European Ocean Pact but also provide inspiring models for other ports seeking to advance their own blue transition.

The following table presents a representative selection of ports leading in maritime sustainability, highlighting their most notable lines of action and their connection to the six main priorities of the pact: ecological protection, sustainable blue economy, integrated governance, marine knowledge, social-territorial dimension, and international cooperation.

*Table 2. Good port practices aligned with the European Pact for the Ocean*

Port	Country/ Region	Areas of emphasis	Relationship with the Pact
<b>Rotterdam</b>	The Netherlands	Circular economy, green hydrogen, electrification, carbon capture	Sustainable blue economy, innovation, energy transition
<b>Hamburg</b>	Germany	Green infrastructure, smartPORT, ecological restoration	Ecosystem protection, environmental digitisation, integrated governance
<b>Los Angeles</b>	US	Clean air plan, electrification, emissions control	Port decarbonisation, environmental health, international climate action
<b>Singapore</b>	Asia-Pacific	Environmental incentives, LNG, automation, predictive control	Technological innovation, sustainable blue economy, international action
<b>Barcelona</b>	Spain	Electrification of terminals, urban-port integration, R&D projects with universities	Territorial governance, urban sustainability, scientific cooperation
<b>Valenciaport</b>	Spain (Mediterranean)	Solar energy, environmental digitisation, European projects (hydrogen, ammonia, underwater drones)	All areas of the compact: clean energy, innovation, governance, circular economy, ocean diplomacy

*Source: Own elaboration based on institutional information from ports, international organisations (OECD, ESPO, IAPH) and European sustainability programmes (GreenPort, Horizon Europe, BlueMed, Clean Air Action Plan, etc.).*

These cases reflect a common trend toward **integrating sustainability** into **port management**, each with approaches adapted to their regional context, technical capacities, and regulatory frameworks. While ports such as Rotterdam and Hamburg have established themselves as benchmarks in circular economy and ecological restoration, examples like Los Angeles and Singapore demonstrate how public-private partnerships and regulatory incentives can accelerate the transition.

Among the cases presented, Valenciaport stands out as an especially comprehensive example in the operational implementation of the European Ocean Pact. The initiatives developed in recent years reflect a growing **commitment to environmental sustainability, technological innovation, and territorial integration**. These actions not only address local challenges but also align directly with the six main areas of action defined in the pact, positioning Valenciaport as a reference case in the European port system.

In the field of **ecosystem protection and restoration**, Valenciaport has incorporated nature-based solutions into its environmental management and strengthened the monitoring of emissions, discharges, and waste. Regarding the **sustainable blue economy**, it participates in European projects focused on alternative fuels, quay electrification, and logistics decarbonization, such as GreenMed, Seanergy, and BlueBarge.

Its commitment to **environmental digitalization**, with the deployment of artificial intelligence, IoT, and drones for real-time monitoring, is directly aligned with the goal of increasing marine knowledge. In terms of governance, its **ethics** and **transparency** policies stand out, as well as its **territorial integration** through urban projects and coastal regeneration. Finally, its active participation in **transnational projects and Mediterranean innovation networks** makes it a key player in European ocean diplomacy.