



 **Green** Inland Ports

# Good Practices

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Hiring sustainability specialists

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## 1.1 Description

Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important topic. In a growing number of logistics companies, employees are either reassigned from other tasks or hired specifically to focus on sustainability. Ports can involve people, such as sustainability employees, consultants, or interns to identify areas for improvement in sustainability. As sustainability is a versatile and broad topic, there are many ways in which employees can be involved. Some examples are:

- So called "energy-scouts" (or energy consultants) can identify where electricity, fuel and heat can be saved within an organisation;
- Interns have gained theoretical knowledge during their education, while having little work experience. They can bring fresh and creative perspectives that lead to innovative ideas. These trainees can be active in areas such as sustainable development or climate and environmental management.
- Within the larger (sea)ports in particular, divisions have been set up that focus entirely on sustainability. These divisions must operate within a limited space, strict laws and regulations and a critical environment (Port of Rotterdam, n.d.).

An example of this good practice being applied is a project in Niedersachsen Ports where sustainability trainees have been appointed, leading to positive outcomes. According to Wuczkowski, M., (2023), young people often come up with innovative ideas that can be implemented in small best practice projects.

## 1.2 Aim

The exact purpose of this good practice depends on how people are deployed. For example:

- For sustainability interns, the goal is to let them help to come up with good and innovative ideas to tackle certain problems. An additional goal is to let them gain relevant work experience and potentially employ them in the long term.
- For employees working full-time for the port authority in sustainability, the main goal is to ensure that:
  - The port complies with all relevant rules and regulations around the subject of sustainability;
  - The project to be implemented has a positive impact on improving sustainability in and/or around the port.

## 1.3 Ports hiring sustainability specialists

- Niedersachsen Ports
- Port of Brussels
- Port of Switzerland (Basel)

- Compagnie Nationale du Rhône (Port of Lyon)

## 1.4 Stakeholders

The main stakeholders are the port concerned and sustainability employees, consultants and/or interns. There may be a collaboration with a university so that internships are part of some study programmes.

## 1.5 Voluntary or mandatory

This good practice can be implemented on a voluntary basis.

## 1.6 Realised/potential impact

- Examples of projects to which sustainability trainees have contributed include the smarter regulation of lighting and light management and the production of green energy with small wind turbines (Wuczkowski, M., 2023).
- Within the Port of Brussels, students have contributed during their graduation project to a technical-financial study on bio-dredging and the creation of a cadastre of renewable energy production capacities (Debrouwer, F., 2024).
- The results from the Green Inland Ports survey (2024) show that there are only a few ports that are applying this good practice, but in different ways. These include responding to internship requests from students enrolled in relevant study programmes, to creating sustainability management or sustainability project leader positions to ensuring innovative and sustainable projects are prioritised.

## 1.7 Possible obstacles

- Hiring external experiences energy consultants can be costly.
- Supervising interns requires effort from port workers (Wuczkowski, M., 2023).
- Interns often have a limited part of their working time available for these projects. They often do not work 40 hours a week and need time to write a report or thesis on their internship (Wuczkowski, M., 2023).
- It can be difficult for interns to approach ports and port employees asking them to implement a different way of working, as ports and port employees often have a certain work routine and can be quite persistent with this.

## 1.8 Key learnings

- Trainees can find creative and innovative ways to tackle certain problems. This is especially useful in a field like sustainability, which is relatively new and has fewer opportunities to follow the beaten track.
- In many inland ports, especially smaller ones, sustainability is not a separate department but is seen as one of the many responsibilities of a port employee. By designating a

separate department (or employee) for sustainability, more time is set aside to address sustainability and environmental issues.

- Input from interns can easily be overlooked. To benefit from their contributions, ports must invest time and take their ideas seriously.

## 1.9 Sources

**Debrouwer, F.**, 2024. E-mail correspondence

**Port of Rotterdam.** n.d. Environmental Management, <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/nl/over-het-havenbedrijf/werken-bij-het-havenbedrijf/environmental-management>.

**Wuczkowski, M.**, 2023. Interview Niedersachsen Ports 20-11-2023.