On 30 September and 1 October 2025, Slagthuset in Malmö will host one of the most important gatherings in the port city. Marking 250 years since Malmö first opened its harbour gates to the world, the City of Malmö—together with Copenhagen Malmö Port, the World Maritime University and the Union of the Baltic Cities—invites policymakers, industry leaders, academics and civil-society representatives to a two-day conference dedicated to the theme “Future-proofing Our Port Cities”.

Since ancient times, ports have been the engines of trade, innovation and urban growth. Today, ports not only manage the 80% of global trade, but they also play a key role in building resilient communities and driving the green transition as foundations for sustainable growth. Yet as sea levels rise and changing climate, these coastal hubs face relevant challenges.

Over this two days of plenaries, expert panels and hands-on discussions, participants will explore how port cities can evolve in harmony with the sea—building resilience, securing supply chains, and unlocking sustainable growth. Decision-makers and officials from all levels of government – local, regional and national – along with authorities, businesses, international stakeholders, and academia will jointly explore solutions to develop and future-proof our port cities, thereby enhancing their attractiveness and sustainable growth.

Sessions at the conference will revolve around two pivotal themes. First, How we future-proof our port cities – growing cities in response to the sea? Many of our port cities in Sweden and around the world face the challenge of adapting cities to a rapidly changing climate. From flood-resistant harbourfronts to elevated infrastructure, speakers will share lessons on designing urban landscapes that embrace rather than fight the tide. Second, the role of ports for growth, the green transition, and as critical infrastructure. Ports are uniquely positioned to power the green economy—welcoming renewable fuels, pioneering low-carbon logistics and serving as incubators for cutting-edge technologies. Leading regional and international experts, along with representatives from ports, cities, authorities, and organizations actively work to drive the innovation, transform and develop commercial ports into strong hubs for supply, support growth, and advance the transition.

Complementing the conference sessions are three immersive study visits that showcase Malmö's own maritime renaissance, that has successfully reconnected the port with the urban waterfront areas. The Southern Shipyard Basin, one of Malmö's oldest and most central shipyard areas, though closed for a century, this site is gradually transforming into a vibrant part of urban center, with new residential, office and public spaces. Examples will be explore of this redevelopment and discuss how the former deep shipyard basin has been reimagined as a shallow sea area, and share insights into working respectfully and curiously with this unique and significant part of Malmö's history, in a harmonious combination of ecology and cultural heritage. A tour of Copenhagen Malmö Port's terminals will give first-hand insights into the commercial port operations, revealing how largest port operator in the Öresund region – the Danish-Swedish venture Copenhagen Malmö Port AB (CMP) – provides efficient transport service in one of Scandinavia's most dynamic and expansive markets. And at the World Maritime University, delegates will step inside the striking headquarters to learn about its mission to educate maritime leaders and tackle the industry's toughest challenges.

As cities around the world grapple with climate change, the new dynamics of global trade and the urgent need for greener infrastructure, "Future-proofing Our Port Cities" offers a unique forum to forge partnerships and shape a sustainable vision for urban harbours, with one eye on 250 years of maritime legacy and the other on the horizon yet to come.

More information
wmu.se/events/future-proofing-our-port-cities/

Conference content and program
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