

# BOOTCAMP

Best Young Finance Team 2026

17-18-19 june



Port of  
Antwerp  
Bruges

in collaboration with

**Deloitte.**





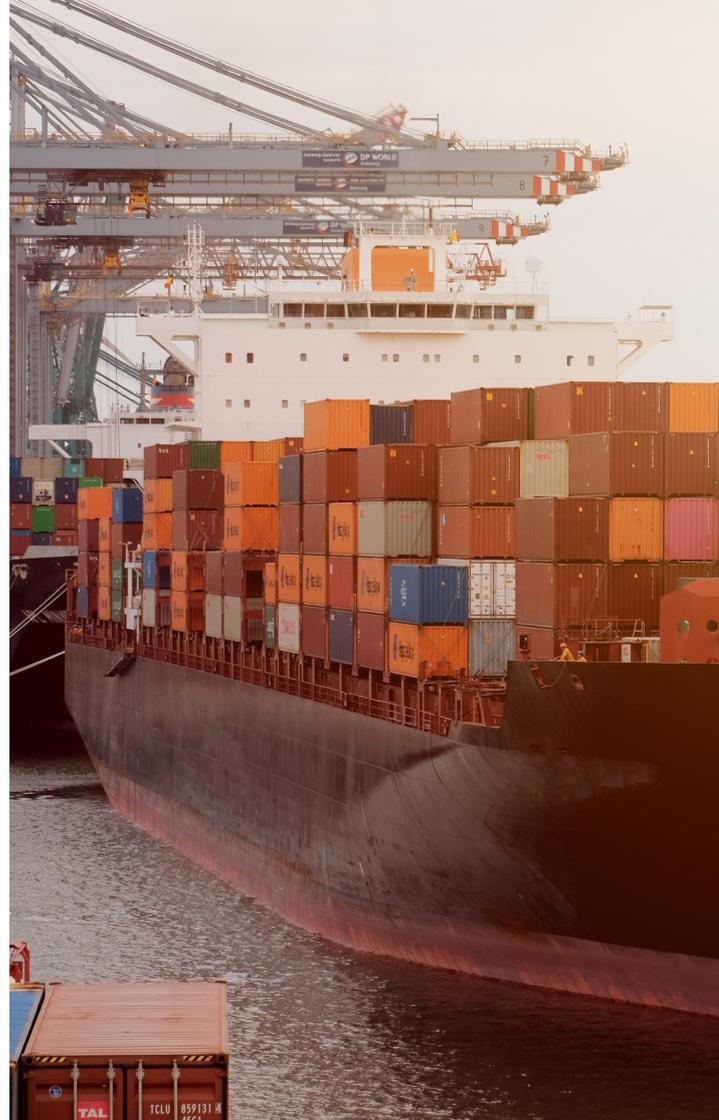
**Are you ready to turn  
the challenges of my  
department into your  
learning experience?**

Nadine Aerts, CFO Port of Antwerp-Bruges

The Port of Antwerp-Bruges is much more than an impressive industrial landscape. It is one of the most important economic engines of Belgium and Europe. Each year, hundreds of millions of tonnes of goods pass through the port, connected to thousands of companies, global supply chains, and a vast network of employment, innovation, and investment.

But behind every container, every vessel, and every logistical movement lies a complex financial reality. Investments, risks, cash flows, pricing, compliance, sustainability, and long-term strategy determine whether such an ecosystem keeps moving or comes to a standstill. A port therefore operates not only through cranes, quays, and kilometres of rail, but equally through strong finance functions. Finance is the silent force that enables growth, underpins decision-making, and brings stability to an environment where margins, timing, and capital are critical. And what applies to a port applies to the economy as a whole: without well-organised, future-oriented finance, everything comes under pressure.

For the upcoming edition of Best Young Finance Team, we are partnering with the finance team of the port to work on their real-world challenges. These real-life cases form the foundation of a compelling and hands-on learning journey.



# DAY 1: FINANCING

The Port of Antwerp-Bruges faces an ambitious investment and transformation agenda and therefore needs additional financing. This funding requirement can be met in several ways, and all options are on the table: direct access to the capital markets through a bond issuance; long-term, traditional bank financing; financing (a significant part) from its own operations through a rigorous working-capital optimisation programme; a focus on project finance; setting up an SPV (possibly with an external partner); and more.

The challenge is not only to secure sufficient funding, but above all to choose the most suitable mix: which financing instruments best match the port authority's risk profile, cash-flow dynamics, investment horizon, and desired flexibility?

## Assignment for participants

### 1) Analysis & pitch to a financing committee

Participants analyse the port organisation and develop a financing case, which they pitch to a committee of diverse potential funders (e.g., banks, bond investors, private parties, and public/strategic partners). This requires: a thorough review of the business (strategy, operations, cash flows, balance sheet, investment needs); clearly identifying the key drivers of value and risk; and translating the numbers into a clear, compelling storyline.

The committee will challenge participants with critical questions on topics such as the risk profile, predictability of cash flows, the impact of cycles and geopolitics, ESG/sustainability investments,

and the expected return (and how that return is "protected" within the chosen structure).

### 2) Advice to the management team

In the second part, participants advise the port organisation's management team on the preferred financing choice and the optimal financing mix. Legal hurdles and complexity are set aside: the focus is on economic rationale, financial feasibility, and strategic fit.

A key point of attention: where is there still "hidden financing" within the organisation itself? Through working-capital management (receivables, payables, inventories, contractual terms, and processes), it is often possible to free up funds that reduce the need for external financing or strengthen the organisation's negotiating position.

## In this session, participants will learn to

- Analyse a business in a thorough and structured way (P&L, balance sheet, cash flow, risks, and value drivers)
- Turn financial analysis into compelling storytelling and an effective pitch
- Define the optimal financing structure (mix, maturities, flexibility, cost, risk)
- Identify opportunities for working-capital optimisation and translate them into concrete levers

# DAY 2: PERFORMANCE AND INVESTMENTS

Until today, investment projects required for the port's expansion, modernisation and operational continuity were almost automatically executed. This aligns with the port organisation's public mandate: investing in infrastructure, capacity, safety and sustainability in service of the economy and society.

However, this approach is coming under increasing pressure. Financial resources are not unlimited, while investment needs continue to grow. In this context, it is no longer feasible to approve every project by default. The port organisation is facing a fundamental shift: from "doing everything that is needed" to making deliberate choices, comparing options, and prioritising.

To enable better, more evidence-based investment decisions, the port's finance team has developed a structured evaluation framework. This framework is designed to assess investment proposals in a consistent and transparent way, taking into account both financial and non-financial criteria.

## Assignment for participants

Participants apply the investment and evaluation framework to a number of concrete potential investment projects, stepping into the role of financial adviser to the management team.

They deliver a clear, well-substantiated recommendation on:

- Which investments should or should not go ahead and why
- How projects compare when resources are scarce
- Which elements are missing from, or could be refined in, the current framework to enable sharper, more robust decisions

The focus is not only on the outcome ("go/no-go"), but above all on the quality of the reasoning and the decision-making process.

## In this session, participants will learn to

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- Turn financial analysis into compelling storytelling and an effective pitch
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- Identify opportunities for working-capital optimisation and translate them into concrete levers

# DAY 3: INNOVATION AND NEW BUSINESSMODELS

Traditionally, a port authority primarily fulfils an infrastructural and facilitating role: providing and managing nautical infrastructure, concessions, safety, and the smooth flow of goods. This core role remains essential, but it is increasingly insufficient to keep ports future-proof, financially resilient, and socially relevant.

As a result, port authorities around the world are actively exploring new forms of value creation beyond their traditional activities. Through innovation, they develop new products and services, often at the intersection of logistics, energy, digitalisation, and data. International examples are numerous and inspiring: from fully or highly automated terminals, to energy and battery parks, shore-power solutions and other infrastructure supporting the energy transition, to digital platforms offering real-time data, IoT sensors, and connectivity to the entire port community.

The Port of Antwerp-Bruges is also investing heavily in these innovations. The real challenge, however, does not lie in conceiving or technically delivering them — but in answering the key question: how can these innovations be turned into sustainable and profitable business models?

- Innovation typically entails:
- High upfront investments
- Uncertain or emerging demand
- New risks and partnerships
- A different perspective on value creation

## Assignment for participants

Participants dive into one or more concrete innovation initiatives. They analyse these innovations from the port authority's perspective and develop answers to the following questions:

- What value is being created — and for whom?
- Who is willing to pay for that value, and why?
- Which business models are viable?
- Which investments, costs, and risks are involved?
- Which role should the port authority assume: investor, facilitator, platform operator, partner, or launching customer?

Participants present a well-founded proposal demonstrating how innovation can contribute to both strategic objectives and financial sustainability.

## In this session, participants will learn to

- Assess innovation through a financial and economic lens
- Design new business models in a complex, multi-stakeholder environment
- Rethink the role of the port authority: from infrastructure manager to ecosystem and platform player
- Balance profitability, risk, and societal value
- Translate innovation into a clear, compelling business narrative for management and stakeholders

# TARGET AUDIENCE

This bootcamp is designed for ambitious finance professionals who want to both deepen and broaden their financial expertise, and who are eager to apply that expertise to real, strategic challenges in a complex and socially relevant context.

## The programme is ideal for participants who:

- Work in finance, controlling, corporate finance, treasury, accounting, audit, or finance consulting
- Have at least three years of professional experience
- Want to sharpen their analytical skills and learn to think like decision-makers
- Aim to translate numbers into clear insights and compelling narratives
- Want to understand how financial decisions are made in a capital-intensive, public, and competitive environment

## Participant profile

- The programme is particularly suited to:
- Young professionals and high potentials within finance departments
- Finance profiles with leadership ambitions
- Professionals who regularly switch between analysis, advice, and decision-making
- Participants who want to learn with and from peers from other companies and sectors

A solid foundation in finance is required; curiosity, eagerness to learn, and commitment are at least as important.

## What participants do not need

- Prior knowledge of the port sector
- In-depth technical knowledge of shipping or logistics. All sector-specific topics are explained and contextualised during the bootcamp.

## Why this programme?

For those who want to look beyond financial models alone and truly understand:

- How strategic choices are really made
- How finance can play an active, steering role in innovation and transformation
- How, as a finance professional, you can create long-term impact



# OUR APPROACH

Participants work in small teams throughout the bootcamp on the different assignments. Each day revolves around one central case (financing, investment decisions, and innovation). By the end of each day, teams have completed their assignment at content level. After the bootcamp, they are given a few additional days to refine their insights and translate them into a clear and compelling presentation.

## **Presentations, feedback, and competition**

All teams have the opportunity to present their solutions and recommendations to a jury composed of:

- The port authority's finance team
- External experts
- Relevant stakeholders

These presentations are a key learning moment. The jury provides targeted feedback on content, reasoning, financial substantiation, and persuasive power. There is also a competitive element: which team succeeds best in convincing the jury and earns the title Best Young Finance Team of the Year?

Importantly, the competition is not an end in itself. Its purpose is to add sharpness and commitment to the programme and to avoid the three-day bootcamp being perceived as non-binding. The learning journey always comes first.

## **Intensive guidance and expertise**

Participants are not left to figure things out on their own. Over the three days, they receive active support from:

- The port authority's senior finance leadership, who provide context, answer questions, and coach teams as they develop the cases
- Experts from Deloitte, who are available throughout the bootcamp for substantive support, reflection, and deeper insight
- CFOs from other organisations and academics, who share their practical experience and insights and offer concrete tools to help solve the cases

This combination of internal and external perspectives creates a realistic, challenging, and inspiring learning environment.

## Learning from each other

There is ample room for informal learning during the sessions. By working in small teams with finance peers from other companies and sectors, participants are exposed to different perspectives, mindsets, and approaches. This cross-pollination is an essential part of the bootcamp and often leads to insights that extend well beyond the cases themselves.

## Developing technical and personal skills

In addition to deepening technical expertise (financing, investments, business models), the programme places strong emphasis on developing personal and professional skills, including:

- Presentation skills
- Storytelling with numbers
- Pitching and influencing decision-makers
- Effective teamwork
- Managing deadlines and pressure

The bootcamp mirrors the reality of a modern finance environment as closely as possible.

## All work? Definitely not.

Sustaining full focus for three consecutive days would be unrealistic. That is why the programme also pays attention to experience and relaxation:

- Participants explore the Port of Antwerp in a unique way, with behind-the-scenes access
- Evening restaurant visits provide space to unwind, network, and get to know each other in an informal setting



# PRACTICAL

The content-focused sessions of the bootcamp take place at:

**Havenhuis, Zaha Hadidplein 1, 2030 Antwerpen.**

Accommodation and evening social activities take place in the centre of Antwerp.

Transportation between the hotel and the Havenhuis is provided. Participants do not need their own car during the bootcamp; cars can be parked either at the Havenhuis or at the hotel. Further details will be shared with participants at a later stage.

Antwerp is, of course, easily accessible by public transport.

The jury meeting take place at:

**Havenhuis, Zaha Hadidplein 1, 2030 Antwerpen.**

Important data:

**Bootcamp: 17-18-19 june 2026**

**Jury meeting: 25 june 2026**



Registration fee, all inclusive (sessions, activities, accommodation, catering,...): 2200 euro, excl VAT.

**More info | registrations: Peter De Roeck  
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