

CER welcomes stronger rail integration in EU Ports Strategy to boost competitiveness, resilience, and climate action

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) welcomes today's publication of the European Commission's EU Ports Strategy, which confirms the strategic importance of port hinterland connectivity and gives stronger recognition to rail and rail freight in port policy, planning and investment decisions.

Ports are vital to Europe's economic strength and strategic autonomy. As gateways to global trade, they must be at the heart of a modern, multimodal and climate-resilient logistics system and that system must be rail-integrated. Despite rail's environmental and operational advantages, its modal share in many European ports remains too low. Major ports such as Rotterdam, Antwerp-Bruges and Valencia record rail shares of under 10%, while Hamburg and Bremerhaven demonstrate the transformative potential of rail, with modal shares above 30% and 50% respectively.

CER therefore welcomes the published Strategy's emphasis on port hinterland connectivity, including stronger rail and inland waterway links. The Commission plan notably asks Member States and stakeholders to give higher priority to improving rail connections to ports, with implications for port planning, development and investment decisions. It also aims to strengthen rules on access to service facilities and rail-related services, crucial to reducing bottlenecks at the rail-port interface.

These elements reflect many of CER's long-standing recommendations and provide a strong basis for improving the rail-port interface across Europe. The focus must now shift from strategic recognition to effective implementation at EU and national level.

Turning strategy into action

Building on the commitments outlined in the Strategy, CER highlights the importance of:

- investing in port-rail infrastructure, including 740m loading tracks, IT-supported track management, and direct ship-to-rail transfer facilities;
- integrating rail planning into port expansions to avoid future bottlenecks;
- accelerating the implementation of the European Transport Corridors and improving hinterland rail links;
- expanding rail-road terminal infrastructure along key corridors;
- ensuring effective implementation of the Military Mobility framework, including upgrading dual-use infrastructure in ports;
- reducing port-related rail costs through improved access to service facilities, fair competition and targeted operating aid;

- advancing the revision of the Combined Transport Directive to enhance modal shift and lower the cost of sustainable intermodal operations.

The Strategy's invitation to Member States to prioritise rail connectivity and interoperability between ports and the rail system must now be reflected in national investment plans and funding decisions. CER also calls for ambitious investment in rail connectivity through the instruments of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034, including a robust Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) with a new envelope of at least EUR 100 billion to support infrastructure upgrades, including in and around European ports.

CER will continue to engage actively with EU institutions and Member States to support the delivery of tangible improvements for rail freight and intermodal transport across Europe. At the same time, CER will pursue its close cooperation with port and rail stakeholders to further strengthen the rail–port interface and promote practical solutions that enhance efficiency, capacity and interoperability.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"The EU Ports Strategy rightly recognises that strong hinterland rail connections are essential for competitive, resilient and climate-neutral ports. The Strategy should serve as a catalyst for raising rail's modal share at European ports towards at least 30% in the coming years. CER will continue its work with its members, as well as with port and rail stakeholders, to further strengthen the rail–port interface and stands ready to work with EU institutions and Member States to ensure the effective implementation of this Strategy."*

Related info:

- CER's **full position paper on rail-port connectivity** is accessible [here](#).
- A **relevant study** "Net-zero logistics: The contribution of rail transport" is accessible [here](#).

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About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together around 70 railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 78% of the rail network length, 81% of the rail freight business and about 94% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policymakers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow [@CER_railways](#) on X or [LinkedIn](#).