



European Federation of Inland Ports

European Inland Ports Call for a unified and robust EU Transport Budget to secure long-term competitiveness and realisation of the Green Deal

The European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP) urges the necessity of a European lead EU transport budget as a foundational requirement to for strengthening Europe's connectivity, economic competitiveness and crisis resilience and military mobility.

Inland ports are deeply concerned about the European Commission's plans to overhaul the EU budget, particularly the proposal to fragment transport funding into single national plans per Member State. This approach risks marginalizing critical investments in transport and logistics infrastructure, especially for the hinterland networks by limiting EU-managed funds to major cross-border projects.

EFIP strongly urges the Commission to preserve and improve the dedicated European transport infrastructure funding instrument, currently known as the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). CEF ensures the development of a competitive, modern, and resilient European Transport Network, supporting the internal market and bolstering Europe's logistical and economic strength. Inland ports play a pivotal role in this system, acting as multimodal hubs connecting rail, road, and waterways, acting as Enablers of Green Logistics which ensure smooth freight flows across borders and deep into Europe's hinterland.

The Commission's proposal to transfer responsibility for transport and port investments to national plans risks undermining the coherence and consistency of European infrastructure development. While national plans in theory may follow EU priorities, the shift damages European-wide coordination and will erode the level playing field between Member States, as highlighted in the Draghi report. Inland ports are particularly vulnerable to fragmented planning, as their functionality depends on cohesive network development which looks at the entire European economy.

The absence of a unified EU-managed funding framework could leave inland ports at the mercy of fluctuating national agendas, jeopardizing their ability to meet the European Green Deal targets and support competitiveness. Without guaranteed earmarking for inland port-related projects, especially those linked to multimodal connectivity, energy transition, greening and digitalization, essential investments could be redirected in favour of more politically appealing initiatives.

Moreover, investments will face additional hurdles if funding is tied to conditional reforms as proposed. Inland ports will have no influence on the possible reforms, hampering their investments. Any future should ensure that transport investments are shielded from cross-sectoral conditionalities that could delay critical projects.

Although inland ports are not strictly "cross-border" entities, they play a significant role in facilitating cross-border trade and transport flows through their multimodal hinterland



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connections. If the EU will only focus on narrow cross-border project they will be neglecting this broader impact which risks undermining the networked nature of Europe's transport system.

A dedicated and reinforced EU transport funding instrument must include a sufficient earmarked envelope for inland ports. Inland ports are indispensable for Europe's logistics, enabling the efficient movement of goods, supporting energy security, resilience and driving the transition to green and digital transport systems. A funding instrument must recognise that inland ports have in general smaller and more targeted projects. This has lead to difficulty in securing European funding when in direct competition with larger scale projects.

Key Recommendations for the EU Transport Infrastructure Instrument

The next EU transport infrastructure instrument should support inland ports by;

- Allocate a dedicated and significantly stronger budget for the transport projects, with specific funds for inland port projects;
- Realise support for smaller and medium projects;
- Ensure equitable support for projects critical to societal goals, such as energy transition, resilience, digitalization, and sustainable logistics;
- Provide fair distribution of funding across all sustainable transport modes, in particular inland waterways;
- Avoid making the "cross-border" criterion an absolute requirement, recognizing inland ports' EU network wide impact;
- Simplify application procedures and reduce administrative burdens.

Inland ports are integral to the future of Europe's transport and logistics networks. By recognizing their unique role and providing adequate funding, the EU can ensure a greener, more competitive, and interconnected Europe.

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