



European Federation of Inland Ports

Position of the European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP) on the Evaluation of the Rail Freight Corridors Regulation

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The unique representative of inland ports in Europe since 1994, EFIP – constituted of nearly 200 inland ports located in 18 Member States of the EU and Switzerland, Serbia and Ukraine – welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation of the Rail Freight Corridors Regulation.

As multimodal hubs, inland ports are **Enablers of Green Logistics**. They bring together inland waterway and rail freight across the European transport network; two commentary modes that excel in long distance logistics. As such, inland ports play an **essential role in increasing the modal split of rail**. As most port authorities assume both social and economic responsibilities, they actively address community challenges beyond the port area. Inland ports are predominantly located in urban, densely populated areas where congestion and air pollution are substantial challenges and where they need to work closely with the surrounding community. In order to address these challenges, increasing the rail freight share is therefore a necessity for many European ports.

However, ports depend on external authorities and stakeholders for the development and management of the rail infrastructure and services outside the port area. To enable smooth connection between the port rail network and the national network, better **coordination and cooperation of the involved stakeholders** is necessary.

In 2019, the Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP) and the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) jointly published the position paper [“Ports in the European Rail System”](#). As part of the current evaluation, the European Inland Ports Federation believe that at least three points need to be taken into account.

Comprehensive connections

As multimodal transport nodes, European inland ports are dependent on access to a well-functioning rail network and therefore fully support the objective of establishing an efficient, sustainable, digital, and safe rail network. A functioning connection to the rail network is the core necessity for any inland port. However, many inland ports that require such connections either find their connections lacking quality and capacity or even a complete absence of a rail connection. **The evaluation needs to take into account the necessity for all inland ports to be connected to the rail network**. For instance, many Danube ports struggle with outdated rail connections while the port of Brussels is having its rail connection dismantled by the federal government.

For inland ports, both rail connections to the national network and cross-border connections are essential. Yet ports depend on external authorities and stakeholders for the development and management of the rail infrastructure and services outside the port area. To **enable smooth cross-**



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border freight transport by rail, operational and technical barriers still need to be removed.

Rail freight investment and cooperation

EFIP believes that the cooperation between the rail freight stakeholders, such as Member States, rail infrastructure managers, inland port authorities, railway undertakings and terminal operators should be further strengthened. Decisions on investments and public works are currently taken primarily on the national level without proper coordination between all relevant stakeholders.

A comprehensive **corridor strategy for coordination and investment planning** is necessary to ensure that infrastructure capacities along the corridor meet the needs of European and international rail freight traffic, including technical and operational interoperability across borders.

The **coordination on both maintenance works and infrastructure expansion or upgrade** along the corridors should be done while reducing the disturbances of freight flows to a minimum. Furthermore, **the corridors should be set out along a network approach**. This should include efficient contingency plans for the possible disruptions of a corridor due to, for instance, climate change challenges.

Rail Freight Corridor's relation to EU legislation

EFIP stresses the importance of a **single coherent network** of Rail Freight Corridors, ERTMS Corridors and TEN-T Corridors. As essential nodes within the European rail freight network, **inland ports that are included in a TEN-T corridor need to be equally included in the respective Rail Freight Corridor**. Such legislative fragmentation leads to a lack of sufficient clarity and directly impedes the modal shift.

EFIP underlines that **stakeholders beyond the national infrastructure managers need to be better involved in the corridor definition, as well as its evaluation**. The current emphasis on the main rail axes impedes a more competitive approach, facilitating international rail freight and the modal shift. European inland ports, as nodes within the rail network, depend on high quality freight train corridors and efficient cross-border rail connections. In order to develop comprehensive Rail Freight Corridors, inland ports together with the other stakeholders need to be included. Consequently, **the national transport ministries or, at least, the national rail infrastructure managers should have an obligation to establish a regular planning and coordination platform**. This would serve to ensure a single efficient network through all corridor-levels with all infrastructure actors (including ports).

Furthermore, it is important that EU rail legislation is coherent in terms of definitions and objectives, as well as in terms of interpretation and implementation by the rail regulatory bodies in order to ensure a level playing field.