

Joint Press release

Brussels, 9 March 2026

CER and ESPO join forces to strengthen Europe's port–rail interface

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) today present a joint position paper outlining shared priorities to strengthen the connection between Europe's railways and its ports and enhance the performance of hinterland logistics chains.

Europe's ports and railways are central pillars of the European transport system. Together, they connect Europe to global markets, support industry and territorial cohesion, and contribute to the functioning of the internal market. In the current geopolitical, economic and climate context, efficient and well-coordinated port–rail connectivity is essential to reinforce competitiveness, resilience, military mobility and sustainability.

Building on their long-standing cross-modal cooperation, CER and ESPO identify key areas where coordinated action can unlock further efficiency and capacity gains.

CER and ESPO call for a simplified regulatory framework that better reflects the operational realities of port–rail areas. Simplifying existing rail rules applicable to port environments – without adding unnecessary administrative burdens and without compromising safety or interoperability – can significantly enhance efficiency and operational performance.

Closer cooperation between port authorities, infrastructure managers, rail freight undertakings and terminal operators is essential to address bottlenecks and operational challenges. Better coordinated planning, streamlined processes and enhanced digitalisation, including improved data sharing, are key to improving capacity, predictability and reliability.

A coherent European policy framework, supported by adequate funding, is equally necessary. EU instruments such as the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and Military Mobility funding play a crucial role in supporting projects with European added value. In the context of the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework, CER and ESPO underline the importance of a strong EU transport budget, including a reinforced CEF with a budget of at least €100 billion to address infrastructure gaps and enhance connectivity and resilience, duly recognising the importance of the rail–port interface.

In fact, a stronger port–rail interface is instrumental to achieving Europe's broader strategic objectives. Ports and railways must function as a coordinated system to support efficient, sustainable and resilient supply chains.

CER and ESPO will continue to deepen their cooperation and stand ready to work constructively with EU institutions and stakeholders to advance a more coherent and effective approach to port–rail connectivity.

Alberto Mazzola, Executive Director of CER, said: *“A strong and well-functioning port–rail interface is essential for Europe’s competitiveness, resilience and green transition. By simplifying operations and regulation, as well as investing and increasing capacity, we can unlock rail’s full potential in port hinterland transport, increase rail’s market share and enhance the performance of Europe’s logistics chains. CER is committed to building strong alliances beyond the rail freight sector and extending to military mobility, working closely with ports and other transport stakeholders to deliver a more integrated and resilient European transport system.”*

Isabelle Ryckbost, Secretary General of ESPO, said: *“At a time where Europe is focused on simplification and relieving the regulatory burden, we need a critical assessment of the legislative framework applicable to the port-rail network to examine where rules can be simplified. The operational reality and challenges within the port and on the port-rail network highly differ from those of the national rail network. ESPO and CER do this joint pledge at a moment where Europe needs strong and well-connected ports and port-rail links to strengthen Europe’s resilience and competitiveness, so any support in this direction and relief of the regulatory burden where possible can only be welcomed.”*

Read [here](#) the full joint position paper: *“Strengthening Europe’s Port–Rail Interface.”*

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](#).

About ESPO: The European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) represents the port authorities, port associations and port administrations of the seaports of 22 Member States of the European Union including Norway at political level. ESPO has also observer members in Albania, Iceland, Israel, Montenegro, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. ESPO is the principal interface between the European seaport authorities and the European institutions. In addition to representing the interests of European ports, ESPO is a knowledge network which brings together professionals from the port sector and national port organisations. ESPO was created in 1993. For more information, visit www.espo.be or follow [@ESPOSecretariat](#) on X or [LinkedIn](#).