European Rail Freight Association

Press Release – A stronger EU transport budget is key for Europe's competitiveness and resilience

05 February 2025

On 05 February, a coalition of 45 associations representing all the diversity of Europe's transport sector has sent an open letter to the Commission and Member States, calling for a stronger EU transport budget. This is an absolute prerequisite for building a competitive, net-zero and resilient European Union.

As the policy discussion on the next Multiannual Financial Framework has started, Europe's transport sector is strongly urging EU policymakers to preserve and strengthen a solid dedicated European transport funding instrument in the future EU budget. As such, the transport sector is very much concerned about the Commission's envisaged plans to redirect a large majority of the EU transport funding towards National Single Plans.

The transport sector believes that a European coordination of infrastructure is crucial more than ever. It is the only guarantee for safeguarding the smooth functioning of the EU internal market, promoting Europe's competitiveness and cohesion, and bolstering its resilience and military preparedness.

For private and independent rail freight operators whose trains are mostly running cross-border, a dedicated EU-wide instrument is key to ensure the completion of cross-border infrastructure projects. These projects are often not viewed as national priorities and may be under risk without an EU-wide financial instrument.

A European mindset is indeed indispensable to strengthen a corridor approach, address bottlenecks and missing links, and deploy key infrastructure parameters for freight trains (740m trains, 22,5t axle load) as agreed in the revised TEN-T Guidelines.

At a time where money is scarce and policymakers are looking for more efficiency in public administration, it would be counterproductive to get rid of an instrument that has shown over the years its ability, even with a limited financial envelop, to carefully select useful infrastructure projects, to act as a catalyser to attract additional financing, and to deliver on money disbursements and completion.

ERFA Secretary General, Conor Feighan, said *"a dedicated EU transport instrument is of crucial importance to implement coherent infrastructure projects along Europe's corridors and to achieve the rail freight growth targets set for 2030 and 2050."*

Access the open letter here.

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