



The Federation of European Private Port Companies and Terminals



Newsletter – May 2024

EU competitiveness must be “THE” priority



On May 31st, 2024, FEPORT members gathered in Antwerp for the mid-year General Assembly meeting of the organisation and formally adopted **FEPORT Manifesto 2024-2029**. The document is a contribution to the ongoing reflections within the EU Commission regarding the new EU roadmap and an invitation to dialogue to all institutional stakeholders who will have the task to work on the new priorities and proposals of the EU Commission.

European ports are in competition with other industries and with other ports in the world to attract investments. So, while the strategic nature of European ports as critical infrastructure is recognised, it is important that this specific status does not entail a lack of stability in the legal framework, among others regarding foreign investments. It is crucial that the EU adopts a consistent approach regarding all critical infrastructures and particularly those situated upstream and downstream ports. Vulnerabilities can also result from fragmented sectoral policies.

The competitiveness of European ports should not be sacrificed on the altar of over-regulation.

The Green Deal and the Fit for 55 package represent an ambitious roadmap implying significant efforts in terms of compliance and additional costs. The focus should now be on proper implementation instead of new rules.

It is also time that the competitiveness and resilience of the maritime ecosystem are placed at the heart of the next EU Commission's roadmap. The financing of the energy transition as well as more money for the Transport sector should be strategic priorities for the EU. It is important to realise that in the absence of meaningful measures of support in favour of EU industries, many companies and industries will lose points of competitiveness vis à vis their non-EU competitors.

"The competitiveness of European ports will be challenged by the changes in trade patterns or the incurred costs resulting from the entry into force of new regulations. Private port companies and terminals located in the EU will compete with operators performing operations in non-EU ports which are not concerned by pieces of legislation such as EU ETS Maritime. The impact of this Directive on European ports has not been sufficiently assessed and will unfortunately lead to business leakage to the detriment of EU based private port companies and terminals" says Mr Gunther Bonz, President of FEPORT.

"The EU should intensify its diplomatic efforts to obtain the adoption of a global scheme comparable to ETS for maritime at IMO. Should this not be possible in the short term, it is crucial that the EU envisages the adjustment of its legislation that harms competitiveness and exposes EU ports to the detrimental effects of carbon leakage both on businesses and employment" adds FEPORT President.

"We also need mitigation measures now and not in two years' time. The competitiveness of European port stakeholders cannot be put at risk because some shipping lines will reorganise their rotations to avoid calling EU ports and paying ETS allowances. We hope the EU Commission will hear this call." concludes Mr Bonz.

FEPORT members call upon EU regulators to also ensure that support measures for one sector of the maritime logistics chain are not used to distort competition in other sectors or towards other players. State Aid schemes that grant a competitive advantage to some actors and not to others while both operate in the same market should be prohibited. In this respect, FEPORT calls again on the EU regulator to restrict tonnage tax schemes to maritime transport and prohibit their extension to cargo handling operations.

In the coming years, EU competition law and trade policy should absolutely keep up with market and technology developments as well as with geopolitical shifts affecting trade and foreign investment policies. Agility and timely reactivity are also needed from EU regulators.

02.05.2024 – European Economic and Social Committee takes position on the issue of drug trafficking in the EU – Brussels



At its plenary session at the end of April, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an opinion entitled "[*Roadmap against drug trafficking*](#)". In its opinion, the EESC advocated Member States to provide their customs administrations and police forces with adequate human and technical resources, decent salary, fair working conditions and continuous training. It also advocates for the involvement of trade unions in resource allocation to ensure a comprehensive approach.

Highlighting the severity of the situation, particularly the surge in illicit drugs like cocaine from South America, the EESC stresses the importance of enhanced cross-border coordination and a holistic societal approach to combat drug abuse. Furthermore, the EESC welcomed the upcoming activities and expanded powers of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and supports the objectives of the proposed Customs Union reform. However, it raises concerns about potential weakening of customs administrations' powers under proposed operational governance, i.e. the European Port Alliance, stressing the importance of maintaining regional knowledge and customs offices.

Finally, the EESC underscored the need for tailored approaches to address the operational needs of individual Member States and calls for a concerted effort to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking and organised crime in the EU.

02.05.2024 – 2nd Transport Cybersecurity Conference – Brussels



On 2nd of May, FEPORT attended the Transport Cybersecurity Conference held in Brussels which was organised by DG MOVE, DG CNECT and other EU agencies.

Several important issues have been discussed and some key points have also been highlighted during the conference:

- The transport sector is the third most affected by cyber threats and incidents in the EU. Up to 51% of companies take up to one month to address vulnerabilities, leaving them exposed to attacks. It is essential to prepare for cyber-attacks to protect critical infrastructure.
- The EU has passed laws such as the NIS 2 Directive and the Cyber Resilience Act to protect against cyber-attacks. Now, the challenge is implementation, with the need for collaboration between legislators and stakeholders and possible guidelines to help understand the obligations.
- Limiting disruptions during an attack is a priority. Integrating cybersecurity into the design of systems can reduce vulnerabilities and increase the resilience of the transport sector. Geopolitical events such as the Russian aggression in Ukraine increase the risk of cyber-attacks in the transport sector.
- It is crucial to keep authorities informed about the latest threats, while simplifying reporting processes to avoid administrative burdens. Effective cooperation between authorities and industry is necessary to ensure security and business continuity in the EU transport sector.

14.05.2024 - FEPORT invited to CER Dinner Debate “Rail Freight, enabling the EU’s Strategic Autonomy” – Brussels



On May 14th, 2024, FEPORT Secretary General, Ms Lamia Kerdjoudj was invited to participate to a panel discussion regarding the future of rail freight and its role for EU strategic autonomy. The panel discussion involved Ms Martina Niemann, CFO, DB Cargo, Ms Katalin Molnár, Deputy

Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU, Mr Kristian Schmidt, Director for Land Transport, European Commission DG MOVE, Sandra Parthie, GRI Member, INT Section President, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and Rinalds Pļavnieks, CEO, LDz.

After few welcoming words from Mr Alberto Mazzola, Director of CER, Ms Martina Niemann, CFO, DB Cargo presented the CER Manifesto 2024-2029 - On Track for Europe, and its four pillars: ensuring fair competition between modes, ensuring adequate financing of railways, ensuring the deployment of rail's key digital enablers and the necessity to a new approach to market and competition policies.

Ms Katalin Molnár, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU addressed the participants and provided insights on the state of play on several files of the Greening Freight Package (notably the Capacity Regulation, Weights and Dimensions Directive and the Combined Transport Directive). She also explained how the incoming Presidency plans its activity, knowing it will need to engage in trilogues with the EP, possibly with the college of Commissioners, still being formed and not yet available to appear at the negotiation table in its full force.

Mr Kristian Schmidt, Director for Land Transport, European Commission DG MOVE outlined the priorities of the rail sector in the coming years and what could be the 'quick wins' in the field of freight transport. He explained that work is already underway on the new proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and that the ambitions for railways are high, while public resources will be limited.

Ms Sandra Parthie (EESC) said that the Greening Freight Package includes two very relevant proposals for freight transport, Weights and Dimensions of Road Vehicles and Combined Transport. The European Parliament has moved ahead with the Weights and Dimensions Directive. The vote in Plenary was very divided on 'giga-liners' suggesting there is strong opposition on the harmonisation of rules to allow the widespread use of these vehicles in Europe.

The European Parliament vote is also a reflection of how people's representatives understood the social concerns on these oversized vehicles and raises the question to what extent the alleged economic benefits outweigh those concerns.

FEPOR Secretary General said that there is a need to learn lessons from COVID and the war in Ukraine when it comes to the strategic autonomy and the role of EU transport networks which guarantee mobility and well-functioning supply chains. Lack of investments in the transport sector poses a risk to the European transport network at large. Estimates indicate that around EUR 500 bn will be needed to complete the core network by 2030 i.e. to maintain the navigability of inland waterways (for growing ship sizes), to improve rail connections to ports and to enable the rollout of clean refuelling and recharging infrastructure for all transport modes in ports and the wider transport network.

In the rail sector, the lack of interoperability of the rail network across the EU, delays of key digital enablers of rail transport (e.g. ERTMS and DAC, Digital Automatic Coupling), delays at border crossings, bottlenecks at last mile connections as well as suboptimal coordination between the stakeholders involved (terminal operators, railway undertakings and infrastructure managers), prevent this transport mode from unlocking its full potential.

The war in Ukraine has shown that a resilient transport network requires improving resilience of all modes as different solutions needed be sought to transport grain due to the situation in the Black Sea.

FEPOR is of the opinion that EU policy should incentivise transport organisers to pick the cleanest transport option available by providing financial incentives (such as via the CTD) and providing transparency on the carbon footprint of door-to-door transport operations (such as via CountEmissionsEU). Policies should not promote one mode in particular.

To increase the attractiveness of rail transport, terminal involvement is crucial. Terminal operators tranship cargo between the modes and thereby constitute an essential link between maritime and hinterland transport modes such as rail. Terminal operators should for instance be consulted in the framework of the establishment and management of the rail corridors.

Seaport terminal operators should therefore be closely consulted regarding infrastructure investments, especially when it comes to resolving bottlenecks that impede ports' connectivity to the rail network. It is equally important to ensure that there is a match between planned investments into capacity expansions on the rail network and available terminal capacity.

The same rationale should apply to rail capacity planning by the infrastructure managers: capacities on the rail network and in terminals should align.

24.05.2024 – European Shippers' Council Webinar on EU Customs reform – Brussels

On the 24th of May, FEPOR attended the European Shippers' Council EU Customs Webinar which brought together experts and stakeholders to discuss changes in the new proposed EU Customs rules. Speakers shared insights on challenges and opportunities in customs processes, aiming at simplifying procedures and enhancing efficiency.

Ms Hernandez Guerrero, Head of Unit of DG TAXUD, outlined the complexities of current customs processes, emphasising the need for simplification and integration. She highlighted the proposal to establish an EU Customs Data Hub and form EU Customs Authorities to streamline operations.

Mr Brocardi, President of ODASCE, delved into the intricacies of customs representation reform, stressing the importance of clarity and accountability. Proposed changes aim to harmonise non-criminal sanctions across Member States, ensuring consistent enforcement.

Mr Frank Heijmann, Counsellor on Customs at the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU, provided an overview of ongoing council discussions, emphasising the collaborative effort to refine customs proposals. Balancing effective governance with trade facilitation, particularly in e-commerce, emerged as a key focus.

Ms Erika Naujoke, CEO of Customs Clear, highlighted the strategic importance of addressing legal complexity and data quality issues. Leveraging technology and standardising knowledge were identified as crucial strategies for navigating customs reforms effectively.

Mr Shakespeare, Director of Strategic Projects and International Development at the Institute of Export & International Trade, underscored the opportunities presented by Customs reforms, particularly in digital trade. Embracing standardised customs practices and fostering trust through programmes like Trust and Check were identified as key drivers for facilitating compliant trade.

Mr Godfried Smit, Secretary General of ESC, discussed Authorised Economic Operator and Trust and Check, emphasising the need for clear guidelines and stakeholder engagement. Balancing increased responsibilities with practical realities emerged as a critical consideration for businesses and customs authorities.

The webinar concluded with a shared vision of a more efficient and streamlined Customs ecosystem in the European Union, driven by collaboration and innovation. ESC presented [EUROPRO](#), an organisation focusing on Customs knowledge and aiming at extending customs cooperation with new members facilitating trade.

24.05.2024 – Council adopts conclusions calling for a competitive maritime sector – Brussels

On the 24th of May, Member States adopted [Council conclusions](#) calling for a maritime industrial strategy to improve the competitiveness of the sector.

The EU calls for a comprehensive and proactive European industrial policy framework, aligned with long-term priorities such as the transition to climate neutrality. This framework should offer more predictability, tools to attract and retain companies within the EU and promote high quality jobs, pursuing the 2030 goals through a strengthened social dialogue.

The need for a more horizontal and efficient approach in sectoral initiatives is emphasised, requiring shared efforts and cooperation between EU institutions, Member States, regional authorities and industrial ecosystems. The Commission is invited to integrate European industrial policy and competitiveness into its agenda for the next mandate, building on the European Green Deal as a driver for growth, innovation and investment.

The Commission is invited to monitor the implementation of laws, assess the impact of future legislative initiatives and apply the ‘think small first’ principle to support SMEs, which account for 99% of businesses in Europe. The importance of the EU 2020 Industrial Strategy, the Green Deal Industrial Plan and the Digital Decade Policy Programme to drive the green and digital transition is reiterated.

Finally, the need for proper implementation of initiatives such as the Chip Act, the Critical Materials Act and the Zero Emission Industry Act is underlined, confirming the relevance of the 14 industrial ecosystems of the EU Industrial Strategy. The Commission is invited to continue assessing the needs of industrial ecosystems and monitoring their development and competitiveness in the single market.

28.05.2024 – Informal Domestic Advisory Group to Domestic Advisory Group meeting (on EU-UK TCA) – Brussels

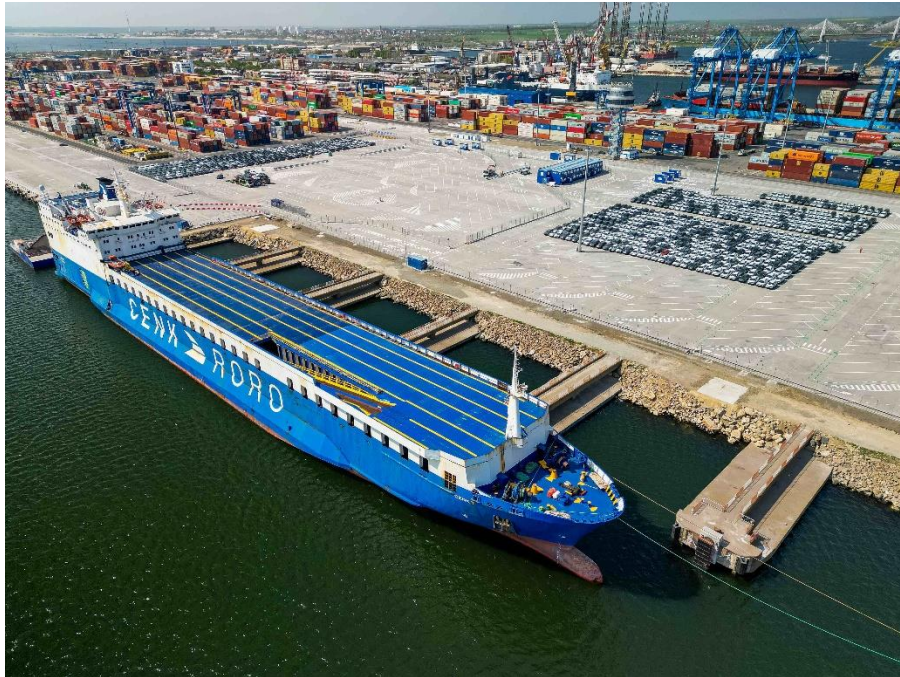
On the 28th of May, FEPORT attended the informal DAG to DAG meeting under the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement held to discuss the UK DAG report. The report delved into several key areas of interest, including:

1. **Trade and Customs:** The primary focus will be on providing comprehensive customs guidance and training for border control staff, as well as considering the applicability of the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) to Northern Ireland.

2. **Level Playing Field and Regulatory Cooperation:** Efforts will centre on modifying and simplifying Rules of Origin within EU-UK trade rules to facilitate smoother trade interactions.
3. **Energy and Climate Change:** Key actions include implementing alternative day-ahead electricity trading arrangements, linking the UK and EU Emissions Trading Systems (ETS), and maintaining active dialogue and cooperation on energy security of supply.

Members' corner

15.05.2024 – DP World invests EUR 130m in Constanta – Romania



On the 15th of May, DP World inaugurated three important new sites in Romania, strengthening the country's status as a European trading hub and stimulating regional economic growth.

In Constanta, the largest container port on the Black Sea, DP World invested EUR 65m in two new facilities: a 5-hectare 'project' cargo terminal for heavy and complex cargo and a 'roll-on, roll-off' (RO-RO) terminal capable of handling up to 80,000 vehicles per year. In addition, an investment of EUR 50m will finance a new multi-transport platform in Konstanz, scheduled to open in 2025. The third new facility, located in Aiud, in the industrial heart of Romania, is an 8-hectare intermodal logistics hub connecting rail and road, supported by an investment of EUR 21m.

These developments will enhance connectivity between DP World's maritime, rail, barge and truck services in Romania, improving the movement of goods between continental Europe and the Black, North and Adriatic Seas. Since 2004, DP World has invested more than EUR 250m in Romania, supported by grants from the European Union.

Marking the 20th anniversary of DP World's presence in Romania – the first European country where it expanded – the company significantly increased its activities, contributing to the impressive development of the port. Over these two decades, Romania has developed into the second largest economy in Eastern Europe, after Poland.

DP World expects its latest investments to attract major companies to relocate or expand their production in the region, a trend driven by rising geopolitical tensions. This trend of nearshoring and reshoring is particularly evident in the automotive sector, which now accounts for 13% of Romania's GDP.

24.05.2024 – Ondas Holdings' Airobotics and HHLA Sky collaborate to offer drone services – Hamburg

Airobotics Ltd, has formed a strategic partnership with HHLA Sky GmbH, a subsidiary of Hamburger Hafen und Logistik AG, to enhance terminal operations, critical infrastructure, and industrial operations in Germany through advanced drone services. This collaboration will integrate Airobotics' autonomous drone technology with HHLA Sky's Integrated Control Center (ICC) and UTM platforms, aiming to bring increased automation and precision to drone operations.



The partnership will focus on using Airobotics' Optimus System, the first FAA-certified drone-in-a-box system for continuous autonomous data capture and analytics, in seaport operations and other critical infrastructures. HHLA Sky's ICC platform supports scalable drone fleet operations, ensuring high reliability and safety standards, and is already deployed in several critical locations in Germany and worldwide.

Events supported by FEPORT

11-13.06.2024 - TOC Europe 2024 - Rotterdam



FEPORT meetings

04.06.2024	Customs and Logistics Committee - Brussels
20.06.2024	Social Affairs Committee – Brussels
02.07.2024	Sectoral Social Dialogue for Ports Committee – Brussels
09.09.2024	Customs and Logistics Committee - Brussels
10.09.2024	Environment, Safety and Security Committee - Brussels
17.09.2024	Port Policy Committee – Brussels
19.09.2024	Board of Directors - Brussels
17.10.2024	Social Affairs Committee – Brussels
27.11.2024	General Assembly meeting – Brussels
28.11.2024	FEPORT Eighth Annual Stakeholders' Conference – Brussels

Parliament meetings

22.07.2024	EMPL Committee Meeting - Brussels
-------------------	-----------------------------------

Council of the EU meetings

17.06.2024	ENV Council – Brussels
-------------------	------------------------