FREIGHT FORWARDERS' MESSAGES TO DECISION MAKERS ON
RAIL FREIGHT

CLECAT
European Association for Forwarding, Transport, Logistics and Customs Services

RAIL FREIGHT CONTINUES TO BE CHARACTERIZED BY A CHALLENGING MARKET ENVIRONMENT AND SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEMBER STATES

CLECAT, the European Freight Forwarders' Association, has outlined its **priorities for rail freight transport for the next five years (2024-2029)**. Despite the European Union's efforts to encourage a modal shift, the development of cross-border rail freight transport remains weak. While some Member States experience growth in rail freight volumes, others face declines and even a reverse modal shift.

The success of attracting new customers to rail freight is often hindered by the poor performance of rail freight services. For freight forwarders, service quality is as important as price-competitiveness when choosing a transport mode. International rail freight is still hampered by infrastructure and operational bottlenecks, particularly at border crossings between Member States. CLECAT recognizes that while these delays are often unavoidable, their impact on the supply chain should be minimized. Response times should match those of road transport for rail to be considered an attractive option.

WITH THIS IN MIND, CLECAT CALLS ON DECISION MAKERS IN RAIL FREIGHT TO:

↗ **Remove existing bottlenecks in a fast and decisive way**, with the aim to promote cross-border transport and logistics services across the EU.

↗ **Monitor the timely implementation of the TEN-T program for rail**, ensuring that the projects supporting the growth of international rail freight will not be delayed.

↗ **Prioritise the revision of the Combined Transport Directive** with the aim to make intermodal transport more efficient and competitive at national and European level.
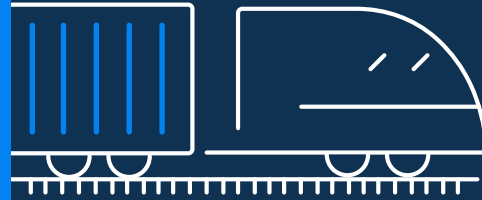
↗ **Prioritise on the adoption of the Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the Single European Railway Area** to optimise railway capacity and improve reliability by creating an international, digital and flexible system for managing and allocating scarce railway capacity.

↗ **Support further industry efforts and projects for a consistent quality management based on Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA)** to better align service quality with client needs to improve punctuality and reliability.

↗ **Review state aid guidelines for Rail Transport** by extending their scope to include all relevant transport operators in the intermodal chain that contribute to the modal shift.

↗ **Enhance the efficiency, availability, and accessibility of multimodal freight terminals** by supporting the improvement and optimisation of current facilities.

↗ **Increase harmonisation of rules concerning train drivers** to ensure the development of a harmonised European rail network and interoperability of rail operations. Mutual recognition of languages on border sections should be expanded to eliminate obstacles stemming from national language requirements.

↗ **Ensure dedicated funding and efficient governance for synchronised trackside and on-board deployment of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS)** and promote new technologies like Digital Capacity Management (DCM) and digital rail freight operations.

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