



Newsletter – December 2023

2024, a year of implementation and dialogue about competitiveness?

It is great news that European ports get attention from policy makers. It is certainly a recognition of their strategic role as enablers of trade and energy transition.

FEPORT hopes that the recent adoption by the TRAN Committee of the INI report on the European Port Strategy inaugurates an era of constructive dialogue between policy makers and port stakeholders on port competitiveness as this topic also requires particular attention.

As part of EU critical infrastructure, EU ports are in the scope of many pieces of legislation such as the Foreign Direct Investment Regulation, which is under review, the Distortive Foreign Subsidies Regulation, the Network and Information Security Directive and the Critical Entities Resilience Directive.

It is crucial that Member States which do not yet have FDI screening mechanisms proceed as soon as possible. The best way to avoid loopholes and heterogeneous rules of access to all critical infrastructures is to systematize the application of the same principles regarding foreign investments. As mentioned in the third EU Commission report on the screening of foreign direct investments[1], progress has been made on a voluntary basis as more countries are adopting screening schemes, but the best solution would be that screening mechanisms become mandatory in all Members States.

Like many sectors in the EU, European ports are in competition with other ports of the world to attract foreign investments. And the only way to catch the attention of investors in big and innovative projects, that will boost the attractiveness of EU ports, is to have a stable legislative framework.

Since many years, European port stakeholders are engaged in the very crucial battle of competitiveness and resilience. This has turned particularly intense after COVID-19 and in the framework of the EU climate ambition. The war in Ukraine has also revealed vulnerabilities upstream and downstream EU ports. These vulnerabilities should also be part of the reflection regarding critical infrastructures.

The corpus of environmental legislation that applies to EU ports is significant and dates to the 1990s when many sectors were still immune from similar laws. European port stakeholders have made efforts to decarbonize long before the EU Green Deal. They firmly pursue their efforts to decrease GHG emissions, green port operations and continue to invest in digitalization and energy transition. It would be important that their leadership and proactivity are also praised and recognized.

During the discussions on Fit for 55 proposals, EU policy makers have set ambitious objectives but in some cases the impact of the new measures on the competitiveness of European ports has not been sufficiently assessed. The way the extra-EU application of ETS Maritime has been envisaged is a good illustration of the lack of proper consideration of the problematic risk of carbon leakage and business leakage some EU ports will have to face in the coming months. ETS costs related to extra-EU voyages will be easily avoided or reduced by calling at ports outside the EU or through transshipment. This will mean less ETS revenues for the Innovation Fund and less revenues for ports.

Will the EU Commission conduct a more precise assessment of the risks of shifts to non-EU ports because of the extra-EU application of ETS and propose concrete mitigation measures to address evasion?

How will ports be able to invest in the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure if their revenues decrease as result of carbon leakage and if they have no guarantees that ships will use the bunkering facilities they will invest in?

How will EU ports be able to play their role of EU gateways, industrial clusters, and hubs of energy if their current and future needs do not translate into concrete measures of support?

How will EU ports be able to facilitate military mobility and connect to each other if significant funding is not mobilized?

How will EU ports meet expectations in terms of energy transition and deploy alternative fuels infrastructure if permitting procedures remain very burdensome and complicate the storage of hydrogen and other types of fuels?

Will the next Connecting Europe Facility budget for transport and ports be as significant as EU environmental ambitions are?

Which amount of the revenues of the Innovation Fund will be allocated to the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure and energy transition in ports?

European port stakeholders wish to play their role and remain competitive, but they are also calling for time to implement what has been adopted so far. A pause is needed.

We also hope that competitiveness of EU ports will be high on the agenda of EU policy makers in 2024.

[\[1\] Register of Commission Documents - COM\(2023\)590 \(europa.eu\)](#)



29.11.2023 –TRAN Committee debates draft report on rail capacity regulation – Brussels

On the 29th of November, the EU Parliament Transport Committee discussed the draft report on the railway capacity regulation. The rapporteur, MEP Tilly Metz (Greens), emphasised the urgent need to decarbonise the transport sector.

The main objective of the draft report is to enhance the position of infrastructure users, establish a more transparent governance structure and optimise the efficiency of the existing rail infrastructure. While acknowledging the importance of the Commission's proposal, MEP Metz argued that a higher level of ambition was needed to effectively achieve the outlined objectives.

She emphasised the importance of not only building new infrastructure, but also of ensuring the maximum efficiency of the infrastructures currently in operation. Among other things, she underlined the need to provide flexibility for freight services and to ensure the full utilisation of reserved railway lines.

The draft report also includes a provision according to which the Infrastructure Managers (IMs) are required to offer alternative capacity to their initial supply plans, thus providing greater

flexibility to meet dynamic market demands. The Committee intends to formalise its position early next year, before the European elections.

FEPOR welcomes this proposal which aims at creating an efficient and reliable railway system and the conditions for an effective coordination. These two objectives are prerequisites for terminal operators to be able to offer multi-modal transport solutions to their customers. Coordination should involve all relevant stakeholders (infrastructure managers, railway undertakings and terminals) and should not be at the detriment of terminal operators' capacity to independently negotiate contracts with railway undertakings.

29.11.2023 - EU Commission's recommendation on the impact of Digitalisation/Automation on the Transport Workforce - Brussels

The European Commission has published a [final recommendation](#) addressing the impact of automation and digitalisation on the transport workforce. This recommendation, which comes from Action Point 69 of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, proposes several measures, including raising awareness, retraining and upskilling workers, improving working conditions, managing change and facilitating the transition through funding.

A workshop was held in March 2023 to collect input from various stakeholders on the final text of the recommendation. The Commission recommends that employer organisations actively disseminate relevant information on the social implications of automation and digitalisation to their affiliates, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Employers are encouraged to promote the upgrading and retraining of their workforce, using the resources and programmes available at European, national and local level.

Furthermore, the Commission emphasises the crucial role of social dialogue as a key aspect of this transition, stressing that it should be supported by all parties involved, including employer organisations, trade unions and public authorities. The overall objective is to address the challenges posed by automation and digitalization, while ensuring a socially responsible and inclusive approach to workforce adaptation.

30.11.2023 - Discussions on customs reform and temporary storage during the 64th TCG plenary session - Brussels

On the 30th of November, FEPOR participated to the 64th plenary session of the Trade Contact Group meeting held in a hybrid format online and at Centre Albert Borschette in Brussels.

An important part of the agenda focused on the UCC reform and the business representatives present were given the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the content of the proposal of the Commission.

One agenda item focused specifically on temporary storage and maritime aspects of the proposal. FEPORT is deeply concerned by the proposal's provisions on temporary storage as the time reduction from 90 to 3-6 days is expected to negatively impact the fluidity of logistics chains, present operational challenges in ports while leading to an increase in administrative and IT costs for terminal operators.

During the meeting, DG TAXUD also gave a presentation about the European Ports Alliance: a public-private partnership to be set up with the aim of combatting drug trafficking and organized crime in EU logistics hubs.

04.12.23 - EU Transport Council adopts general approach on CountEmissions EU - Brussels

On the 4th of December, the EU Transport Council adopted its [general approach](#) on CountEmissions EU proposal.

The main purpose of the proposal is to improve the calculation of and information on the greenhouse gas emissions of transport services so that customers can choose the most sustainable transport options.

The proposed regulation establishes a standardized regulatory framework, based on ISO standard 14.083, for accounting greenhouse gas emissions in transport services throughout the entire multimodal transport chain, in order to create a level playing field among different modes and the EU's national networks.

Calculating or reporting GHG emissions will not be mandatory, but compliance to the methodology will be required when disclosing data or if calculation and reporting are required by applicable national law. Companies may calculate and report GHG emissions from their transport operations on a voluntary or contractual basis, or when required by other specific measures taken by industry and public authorities.

The general thrust of the Commission's proposal was retained in the Council's common position. The Council introduced, however, some amendments to the proposal, mainly aiming to:

- avoid duplication of rules for the accounting of greenhouse gas emissions under different pieces of EU legislation
- facilitate implementation of the regulation by SMEs
- allow Member States to apply stricter rules on domestic transport operations, except those carried out by SMEs.

The Belgian Presidency will start trilogues with the European Parliament once the latter agrees on its position.

06.12.2023 – Two important appointments within DG MOVE – Brussels



On the 6th of December, the European Commission appointed Mr Herald Ruijters as Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Transport and Mobility (DG MOVE), in charge of 'Investment, Innovative and Sustainable Transport' and Ms Michela Matuella as Director 'Waterborne' at the Directorate-General for Transport and Mobility (DG MOVE). The Director General of DG MOVE is, since few months, Ms Magda Kopczynska who has been in the past Director 'Waterborne' within DG MOVE.

Mr Ruijters brings a wealth of experience to his role, with a 30-year career in the transport and energy sector, including two decades within the Commission. His extensive knowledge in the transport domain has played a pivotal role in shaping legislative procedures and Directives across various areas such as TEN-T, military mobility, research, innovation, urban mobility as well as passenger rights, social, and equality aspects.

Mr Ruijters is currently Director for 'Investment, Innovative and Sustainable Transport' responsible for, among others, all transport related budgetary instruments. He is also Member of the Steering Board for InvestEU.

Ms Matuella has taken up various management positions in the Commission in the past two decades. With a background encompassing external relations, enlargement negotiations, and development cooperation, she brings with her a wealth of cross-cutting policy experience.

Michela Matuella served in the EU Delegations in Eritrea and Lesotho and also worked in the Cabinet of the former Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle. She is currently holding the position of Head of Unit for Albania and North Macedonia and Acting Director for Western Balkans in the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.

07.12.2023 - TRAN Committee adopts INI Report on the European Port Strategy – Brussels

On the 7th of December, the draft resolution on the *European Port Strategy* was adopted unanimously – with 39 votes in favour – during the TRAN Committee meeting.

The draft resolution will be voted on during the next plenary session in Strasbourg (January 2024).



MEPs called on the Commission and Member States to urgently carry out a risk assessment of China's and other non-EU countries' involvement in maritime infrastructure. Moreover, they asked for mandatory screening of foreign direct investments and recommended cooperation between EU ports to address security related risks.

Finally, MEPs called for a European Port Summit and requested the Commission to present a European Port Strategy before the end of 2024.

08.12.23 – MEPs and Council agree on the reform of EU gas and hydrogen market governance – Brussels

On the 8th of December, the Spanish Presidency and the MEPs reached a provisional political agreement to boost renewable and low-carbon gases, including hydrogen, on the EU gas market. Aligned with the objectives of the European Green Deal and the 'fit for 55' package, the proposal aims to support the decarbonisation of the energy sector by increasing the production and integration of renewable gases and hydrogen into EU energy networks.

The regulation encourages natural gas infrastructure to integrate a higher share of hydrogen and renewable gases, offering tariff discounts. It promotes EU collaboration on gas quality, storage, and addresses climate change while securing gas supply.

Moreover, MEPs secured a joint purchasing system for gas, which will aggregate demand to prevent Member States from competing against each other when bidding for gas and initiated a voluntary system supporting hydrogen market development for five years.

MEPs advocated for strengthening measures to boost investment in new infrastructure for hydrogen, in particular in coal regions, to facilitate the just transition of these regions and encourage the switch to biomethane and green hydrogen.

08.12.2023 – Priorities of the Belgian Presidency in the transport sector – Brussels

As from the 1st of January 2024, The Belgium Presidency of the Union will start for a period of six months.



During a Press Conference, held on the 8th of December 2023, the Belgian Presidency has presented its priorities.

Sustainability will be a key topic, with a focus on concluding initiatives like the Greening Freight Transport Package, encouraging modal shifts, and reducing air pollution. Digitalization of transport and cross-border cooperation are also priorities.

Moreover, the Presidency wishes to emphasize social responsibility in the transport sector, address working conditions and protection. Safety remains crucial, with initiatives to strengthen the transport sector's efficiency and safety, including updated driving license requirements and maritime safety legislation.

Another central theme is cross-border collaboration, with a focus on legal integration, digital data access for law enforcement, and reinforcing judicial and security cooperation.

The Presidency, aligned with the European Green Deal, aims to conclude legislative files quickly. Initiatives include a certification framework for carbon removals, reviewing CO₂ emission standards, and advancing key proposals such as the Air Quality Directive.

You can find the full program [here](#).

18.12.2023 – 9th EU DAG meeting under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) - Brussels

On December 18th, FEPORT participated to the 9th EU DAG under the EU/UK TCA. The meeting involved representatives from different industries including transport as well as the EU Commission (DG Trade). Besides priority topics that have been highlighted by the different industries, the EU Commission debriefed participants about the 3rd meeting of the Trade

Partnership Committee under the UK-EU TCA on 7 December 2023 and on the DAG-to-DAG meeting and CSF held in London on 6 and 7 November.

There are still many uncertainties on the implications of the Freeport initiative and how the UK ETS will materialize. The UK might implement a mechanism similar to CBAM but it is not yet clear how and when this will take place.

In the framework of the structured dialogue between industry, trade unions and the EU Commission, DG Trade confirmed that trade and goods, level playing field, energy and climate and trading services remain the main chapters of discussions with the UK counterparts.

Members' corner

06.12.2023 - APM Terminals and DP World launch coalition to accelerate adoption of zero-emission container handling equipment – Dubai



APM Terminals (APMT) and DP World have established the Zero Emission Port Alliance (ZEPA) at COP 28 to accelerate the decarbonisation of ports, focusing on making battery-electric container handling equipment (BE-CHE) more accessible and affordable. The ZEPA, which will start its work in early 2024, is an industry coalition open to all stakeholders, including terminal operators, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), port authorities and government agencies.

The alliance aims to address affordability and accessibility issues by promoting more BE-CHE production, reducing product costs, facilitating battery and charging solutions, simplifying deployment and ensuring the preparation of terminal operators and network infrastructure. ZEPA also seeks to create favourable conditions for zero-emission fleets and accelerate the adoption of zero-emission CHE.

Members will contribute on the basis of practical experience and ZEPA will operate transparently in compliance with antitrust laws, sharing key findings with the industry. The initiative comes as a result of a white paper commissioned by APMT and DP World in October, which indicates the potential competitiveness of BE-CHE with targeted collective action over the next two to eight years.

Source: Systemiq

11.12.2023 – PIL and DP World to collaborate on decarbonisation projects – Dubai



Pacific International Lines (PIL), a leading Singapore-based shipping company, and DP World, which handles around 10% of the world's container trade, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) during COP 28 to collaborate on sustainable initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in supply chains. The agreement includes test shipments between the port of Jebel Ali in Dubai and destinations served by PIL. These shipments will use biofuel blends and measures will be implemented to reduce the greenhouse gas footprint.

Concrete actions include the use of PIL vessels powered by a biofuel blend, biofuel bunkering, and the use of renewable-powered terminal equipment for container handling. These initiatives aim to show the feasibility and effectiveness of sustainable solutions in the maritime sector.

In the long term, PIL and DP World intend to expand the collaboration to other ports in DP World's global network. They will also explore the adoption of alternatives to conventional fuels in PIL's ship operations and bunkering processes.

The partnership aims to develop and implement sustainable solutions in the maritime sector, contribute to decarbonisation efforts and address global environmental challenges.

Source: Container Management

Events attended by FEPORT

02/05.04.2024 - Connecting Europe days 2024 – Brussels



FEPORT meetings

01.02.2024	Environment, Safety and Security Committee - Brussels
02.02.2024	Customs and Logistics Committee - Brussels
08.02.2024	Social Affairs Committee – Brussels
14.02.2024	Port Policy Committee – Brussels
15.02.2024	Board of Directors - Brussels
11.04.2024	Board of Directors - Brussels
14.05.2024	Environment, Safety and Security Committee - Brussels
30.05.2024	Port Policy Committee – Brussels
04.06.2024	Customs and Logistics Committee - Brussels
11.06.2024	Social Affairs Committee – Brussels
10.09.2024	Environment, Safety and Security Committee - Brussels
10.09.2024	Customs and Logistics Committee - Brussels
19.09.2024	Port Policy Committee – Brussels

26.09.2024	Board of Directors - Brussels
17.10.2024	Social Affairs Committee – Brussels
27.11.2024	General Assembly Meeting – Brussels
28.11.2024	FEPORT Eight Annual Stakeholders’ Conference – Brussels

Parliament meetings

08.01.2024	TRAN Committee Meeting - Brussels
11.01.2024	ENVI Committee Meeting – Brussels
11.01.2024	EMPL Committee Meeting - Brussels
22.01.2024	TRAN Committee Meeting – Brussels
22.01.2024	ITRE Committee Meeting – Brussels
22.01.2024	EMPL Committee Meeting - Brussels
23.01.2024	ITRE Committee Meeting - Brussels
23.01.2024	TRAN Committee Meeting – Brussels
23.01.2024	EMPL Committee Meeting - Brussels
24.01.2024	ENVI Committee Meeting – Brussels
24.01.2024	INTA Committee Meeting – Brussels
25.01.2024	INTA Committee Meeting - Brussels
29.01.2024	ENVI Committee Meeting – Brussels

Council of the EU meetings

15.01.2024	ENV Council – Brussels
04.03.2024	TTE Council – Brussels
25.03.2024	ENV Council – Brussels
03.04.2024	TTE Council – Brussels

11.04.2024

TTE Council – Brussels

17.06.2024

ENV Council – Brussels