

Investing EU funds for a sustainable and efficient European logistics network: the Mediterranean port alternative

EU funding for logistics and transport must go to sustainable and scalable solutions. In this respect, the Mediterranean region should play a key role in building the present and future of logistics; we should not dwell on the past and be enslaved by the history of logistics. The new TEN-T is a unique opportunity for European logistics to achieve a less congested, more efficient and more sustainable transport system.

The first funding phase of the Connecting Europe Facility may be the first step towards meeting the objectives in reducing the environmental footprint of the transport sector and achieving a competitive and resource-efficient system. In this sense, Southern European ports are willing to exchange views with the European Commission on how to allocate TEN-T funds efficiently and on the key role that Mediterranean gateways can also play in producing a mass, competitive mapping of European freight connectivity.

Our present European logistics generates unnecessary environmental stress for European citizens. Thanks to significant improvements in infrastructure, efficiency and productivity, Mediterranean Ports have been recognised by all actors as a competitive alternative solution to serve and improve the supply chain of European industries and consumers. This development trend of Mediterranean Ports, which is also supported by EU policies and funds, should continue in the coming years to achieve a balanced freight transport and logistics system including two complementary port ranges (Mediterranean and Northern) that guarantee a balanced, efficient and sustainable access to EU markets.

Considering furthermore the growing trend towards shipping lines alliances, the possibility to distribute fleet deployment and share calls among two European port ranges reduces the need for new infrastructure investments, alleviates congestion threats, limits extra demand for land and restricts other environmental effects. Moreover, Mediterranean ports represent a key element in the construction of the European neighbourhood policy, as they are fundamental gateways to cargo and passenger flows with North African and Middle East countries. Labour costs can be lower in Mediterranean Ports than in other European basins; cargo and terminal handling has been generally privatised; and transparency, reliability and productivity have also improved considerably.

In a slow but regularly growing process, some European companies and operators are reducing the environmental footprint of their logistics chains and improving competitiveness and efficiency by gradually shifting part of their flows via Mediterranean Ports, and are choosing innovative logistics solutions. This trend could be accelerated if Mediterranean ports could benefit from more efficient hinterland connectivity. When this rail and road connectivity becomes effective, European transport network mapping will show huge reductions in pollutant emissions, congestion and wasted money, as evidenced by many independent reports.

The Mediterranean port alternative represents an opportunity for the European transport system, which, if ignored, could seriously jeopardise its connectivity, competitiveness and the chance to address the environmental challenges of the coming years.

This press release is issued on 28 October 2014 by INTERMED GATEWAYS (Ports of Barcelona, Marseille and Genoa). Intermed Gateways was founded in 1998 by the ports of Barcelona, Marseilles and Genoa with the main objective of promoting the role of Intermed Gateways and Mediterranean ports on a sustainable and more efficient European logistics.