



## Letter to the Italian institutions

## Letter to the European institutions

# Coronavirus crisis: safeguarding intermodal rail transport as a strategic asset for the economy

The coronavirus crisis has serious repercussions on Italian and European logistics chains. Today, Italy is in the front line. The restrictions imposed by the government on 8/9.3.2020 do not directly limit freight transportation, but nevertheless they have significant effects on logistics and the economy. It is precisely at this time that further restrictive actions could be taken to protect public health in Italy and other European countries.

The European dimension deserves particular attention, considering the industrial interdependence of the companies on our continent and the rapid extension of the epidemic in many countries. The Italian economy is closely linked to the markets of Central and Northern Europe. If the flows of goods do not work, there is a risk of the collapse of the entire economy.

In this context rail transport, both intermodal and conventional, plays a strategic role, as it moves large quantities of goods over long distances, with fixed and monitorable routes, and with a limited use of staff that can be easily controlled from a health point of view.

## Intermodality in figures

In Italy, the volume of goods transported by rail amounts to 97 million tonnes per year, including 60 million with the type of intermodal road/rail transport. Particularly relevant is the international share, with 62 million tons in import/export.

The commodity covers both the supply of private individuals (medicines, fuels, food) and industrial production (raw materials, semi-finished products).

## A safe system

Intermodal rail transport uses the rail mode for long distances and the road for final distribution.

It is a closed, easily controllable, traceable and adjustable system, based on a reduced number of terminals. Since the beginning of the coronavirus emergency, the various actors in the logistics chain have adopted a series of measures to protect the health and safety of the people involved in the production processes, implementing and often anticipating the indications of the authorities.

Today, leading companies in the logistics sector are shifting a significant amount of goods to rail in order to reduce the mobility of people (drivers) across Europe. This happens especially in the north-south corridor for traffic to/from Italy. Consider that on rail transport a train crew (maximum 2 people) moves 40 semi-trailers, while a transshipment terminal that handles 20 pairs of trains daily, uses 60 railway staff to move goods that would otherwise require 800 truck drivers.

## “Contactless” intermodal management

The measures taken by intermodal transport actors make it possible to comply with the new rules. There is relative certainty that the opportunities for contagion are reduced to a minimum.

Actor	Characteristics	Adopted measures
Railway undertakings	A single crew of drivers moves the load of 40 trucks across Europe	Equipping drivers with personal health protection devices Cabin and equipment disinfection "Contactless" management of long-distance driver shifts
Transshipment terminals	They are located near the motorway exits Accessible through secured gates (often computerized) with employees in a protected area (guardian lodge) The driver leaves the loading unit in the designated areas. He often picks up another vehicle and leaves the terminal The terminal operator works with a crane without coming into contact with the driver; unloads and loads the train without having contact (except for radio connections) with the operations office The train is moved with autonomous shunting teams that place it on the operating tracks; the train is then brought onto the sidings and then starts its journey on the main line	Equipping employees and customers (drivers) with personal health protection devices Re-organisation of check in/check out processes with social distancing and telematics conversion Wide use of smart working and teleconferencing Reorganization or closure of common areas such as cafeterias, changing rooms and break rooms Regular disinfections Suspension of not strictly necessary work, carried out by external firms, such as site extension works Under evaluation: thermoscan at the beginning of each shift upon indication of the company doctor
Transport companies	The drivers deliver and collect the loading units at the terminal They perform first/last mile journeys within a range that usually does not exceed 50/70 km around the terminal, which is more compatible with the geographical and technical characteristics of intermodal transport	Equipping drivers with personal health protection devices Constant call to respect the rules of hygiene and behaviour Administrative procedures at the counter in "contactless" mode Road movement inside the terminal without contact with terminal employees

## Intermodal rail freight: safeguarding logistics in times of coronavirus

If intermodal rail transport is vital for the economy and supplies, it must be supported and guaranteed with specific aids and measures that can be summarised as follows:

1. Clear and transparent communication at institutional level, avoiding counterproductive alarmism, with strong reference to the strategic role of intermodal transport in this sanitary emergency
2. Transshipment terminals are the essential link in the operation of intermodal transport and require special attention, including first/last mile services on road
3. Safeguarding intermodal transport through interventions and processes coordinated with the Civil Protection and the Regions involved, but by coordinating these actions at a central level in order to have uniform procedures of action. It would be useful to define, through the intervention or the presence of the Civil Protection, the functionality of the safety measures and the work continuity
4. Any blocking of rail transport would be counterproductive from the point of view of public health and should therefore be avoided at all costs



5. The services will be managed according to safety procedures aimed at avoiding the risks of contagion through the containment of the number of contacts between people and the definition of specific modalities in accordance with the health provisions in force, excluding the conditions to activate the quarantine requirements
6. Digitalization and administrative simplification, including the speeding up of the authorisation processes of railway customs corridors
7. Provide for actions to support companies operating in the transport chain, by introducing procedures with well-tested administrative systems (see Marebonus or Ferrobonus), but provided pro tempore on new transport carried out in this emergency phase, without complicated criteria of proportionality
8. Provide for actions to support the cost of labour in companies that reduce activity due to a significant drop in volumes
9. Deferral of expected payments due to lack of liquidity
10. Deferral of one month for all administrative formalities to the public administration
11. Hyper-amortisation: facilitate investments and interconnected capital goods covered by the Industry Plan 4.0 with the aid foreseen in the hyper-amortisation plan.

We remind you that the coronavirus phenomenon is currently particularly critical in Italy, but is expanding throughout Europe. To protect the Italian and European economy, it is essential to act in a fast, lean, pragmatic way. Every threat brings opportunities and it is therefore time to push with determination towards a sustainable, safe and resilient transport mode such as intermodal transport.

We remain available to overcome, together, this critical moment.

**Signed by directors and/or chairmen of the following associations:**

ANITA - Associazione Nazionale Imprese Trasporti Automobilistici  
 ASSOFERR - Associazione Operatori Ferroviari e Intermodali  
 ASSOLOGISTICA  
 FERCARGO  
 FERCARGO MANOVRA  
 FERCARGO ROTABILI  
 FERCARGO TERMINAL  
 SOS LOGISTICA - Associazione per la Logistica Sostenibile  
 UIR - Unione Interporti Riuniti

ESC - European Shippers' Council, Bruxelles  
 ERFA - European Rail Freight Association, Bruxelles  
 NEE - Netzwerk Europäischer Eisenbahnen (NEE) e.V, Berlin  
 UIRR - International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport, Bruxelles