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

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POSITION PAPER

Freight forwarders' views on the Grids Package

CLECAT, the European Association for Forwarding, Transport, Logistics and Customs Services, welcomes the European Commission's Grids Package as an important step towards strengthening Europe's electricity infrastructure. The initiative is essential to ensure that the European energy system can support the transition to zero-emission transport while maintaining the reliability and competitiveness of freight transport and logistics operations across the EU.

The decarbonisation of freight transport is accelerating, driven by EU climate objectives and the increasing deployment of zero-emission vehicles. However, the success of this transition depends on the availability of sufficient infrastructure, a robust and well-coordinated electricity grid, and clear operational feasibility. Freight forwarders and logistics service providers must be able to rely on adequate grid capacity, stable electricity supply and predictable grid connections in order to invest confidently in zero-emission technologies. These conditions are essential not only for the deployment of charging infrastructure at logistics depots and along major transport corridors, but also for ensuring the operational continuity and reliability of European supply chains.

In this context, the effectiveness of the Grids Package will depend on its ability to address the practical enabling conditions required by the logistics sector. In particular, infrastructure planning and regulatory frameworks must move beyond general objectives and ensure that grid development is aligned with real operational demand and deployment timelines.

CLECAT therefore highlights the following key priorities:

- Ensure binding minimum grid capacity along TEN-T and TEN-E corridors
- Replace arbitrary permitting thresholds with criteria-based approaches reflecting grid realities
- Guarantee timely and firm grid connections with sufficient and reliable capacity
- Introduce transparent and efficient grid allocation mechanisms
- Align energy infrastructure planning with transport decarbonisation timelines

CLECAT sets out below its detailed comments on the European Commission's proposals, in particular regarding the revision of permit-granting procedures for electricity infrastructure and the amendment of the TEN-E Regulation.

1. Proposal to amend directives on accelerating permit-granting procedures

Closing the gap between faster permitting and grid connections

While CLECAT welcomes the Commission's efforts to simplify and accelerate permitting procedures for electricity infrastructure, faster permitting alone will not be sufficient to support the rapid electrification of road freight transport. Even where approval procedures are streamlined, projects may still face long waiting times for grid connections. Without timely and predictable access to grid connections with sufficient electricity capacity, charging infrastructure cannot be deployed at the scale required.

Charging infrastructure at logistics depots and along major transport corridors depends on reliable and timely grid connections provided by distribution system operators (DSOs). If operators continue to face delays or uncertainty regarding available grid capacity, investments in charging infrastructure and zero-emission vehicle fleets risk being postponed. Accelerating permitting procedures will therefore have limited impact if grid connection bottlenecks remain unresolved.

Greater transparency regarding grid capacity availability, pricing structures and connection timelines will be essential to provide logistics operators with the certainty needed to plan investments and operations. Ensuring timely and reliable grid connections must therefore accompany permitting reforms and should be recognised as a critical prerequisite for scaling up zero-emission freight transport across Europe.

Permitting thresholds should reflect operational realities

The Commission proposes to simplify permitting procedures for recharging infrastructure by introducing a differentiated approach based on capacity. Under the proposal, recharging stations below 100 kW would not require a permit, removing most administrative procedures except for grid connection approval, and benefiting from tacit approval while being exempt from environmental impact assessments. For installations above this threshold, the proposal introduces a maximum permitting period of six months, which represents a significant improvement compared to the longer and often unpredictable waiting times that previously applied.

While the introduction of a maximum permitting timeframe is a positive step, the proposed 100 kW threshold does not reflect the operational needs of the freight transport and logistics sector. Charging infrastructure used by freight and logistics operators is typically installed at logistics depots, distribution hubs and along major transport corridors, where multiple vehicles need to charge simultaneously. These installations therefore require significantly higher power capacities than 100 kW. In addition, the impact of a charging installation on the electricity grid does not depend on a single predefined power level. The effect on the grid is determined by local network conditions, such as available grid capacity and connection characteristics. As a result, a fixed threshold of 100 kW does not necessarily correspond to the actual impact of a charging installation on the electricity system.

CLECAT therefore calls for permitting rules that better reflect both the operational realities of freight transport and the actual impact of charging infrastructure on the electricity grid. While power thresholds can support faster infrastructure deployment, the current 100 kW threshold neither reflects the higher-capacity charging installations typically required nor the way grid impacts are assessed in practice. Maintaining full permitting requirements for all installations above 100 kW risks slowing down precisely those high-capacity projects that are essential for freight transport electrification.

CLECAT further calls for the introduction of more efficient and transparent grid capacity allocation mechanisms, moving beyond “first-come, first-served” approaches. Allocation models should prioritise mature and ready-to-deploy projects, in order to avoid speculative reservation of grid capacity and ensure that available capacity is used effectively. In addition, Member States should be encouraged to establish clear and harmonised prioritisation frameworks, recognising the essential role of freight transport in ensuring economic continuity and the functioning of supply chains.

2. Proposal to amend the ten-e regulation

EU central scenario

CLECAT welcomes the proposal to establish a central EU energy scenario for planning electricity, hydrogen and gas infrastructure. Moving to a single EU reference scenario marks a shift from the previous approach, where network planning relied largely on scenarios developed by transmission system operators. A central EU scenario can improve transparency and strengthen coordination of long-term infrastructure planning and investments across Member States. However, it is essential that the development of this central scenario adequately reflects the needs of the transport and logistics sector. The decarbonisation of freight transport will require a significant expansion of depot charging infrastructure and public charging stations along major transport corridors. These charging facilities will create substantial new electricity demand, and it is therefore crucial that grid planning anticipates and accommodates this demand.

CLECAT stresses that EU energy network planning must be long-term, transparent and explicitly aligned with transport decarbonisation legisation. In particular, the development of the central EU energy scenario should be complemented by binding minimum capacity targets for networks feeding into TEN-E and TEN-T corridors, ensuring that infrastructure is deployed where freight transport demand will materialise.

Freight transport operations are inherently cross-border and corridor-based. Without guaranteed capacity along these corridors, infrastructure gaps in one Member State risk undermining the effectiveness of the entire network.

CLECAT therefore calls for a more operational approach to scenario development, including structured and continuous involvement of logistics operators, so that electricity, hydrogen and gas infrastructure planning reflects real-world demand patterns, depot locations and corridor flows.

Reliable and sufficient grid capacity

For freight forwarders and logistics operators, reliable access to electricity will become increasingly important as freight transport electrifies. Logistics operations rely on carefully planned routes across cross-border transport corridors. Charging infrastructure along these routes must therefore provide stable and predictable power supply to ensure efficient route planning and the timely movement of goods. If charging infrastructure cannot reliably deliver the power capacity expected by operators, this can disrupt route planning and logistics operations. Vehicles may need to wait longer to charge, charging times may increase, or planned charging stops may no longer be viable. Such uncertainties can lead to delays in freight transport and reduce the efficiency and predictability of logistics services across European transport corridors.

CLECAT therefore stresses that grid planning must prioritise reliability and sufficient electricity capacity and ensure that the grid capacity promised during infrastructure planning corresponds to the electricity that can be supplied in practice.

Aligning Energy Infrastructure Development with Transport Electrification

A successful transition to zero-emission freight transport requires that the development of energy infrastructure keeps pace with the electrification of the transport sector. While logistics operators and freight forwarders are increasingly willing to invest in zero-emission vehicles, these investments

depend on the availability of reliable and sufficient electricity supply. For the transition to succeed, the demand and supply sides of the energy system must develop in parallel. EU legislation such as CO_2 standards and the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR) is accelerating the shift to zero-emission transport, but the electricity grid and energy infrastructure must expand at the same pace to support this growing demand.

Currently, energy infrastructure risks falling behind the speed of transport electrification. Delays in grid reinforcement and energy infrastructure deployment may create uncertainty for logistics operators and slow down investments in zero-emission technologies. It is therefore essential that energy infrastructure projects are delivered in a timely and coordinated manner so that regulatory ambition is matched by the practical conditions required to implement the transition.

1. Conclusion

CLECAT welcomes the European Commission's Grids Package as an important step towards strengthening Europe's electricity infrastructure and enabling the transition to zero-emission freight transport. The effectiveness of the proposal will depend on its ability to address the practical enabling conditions required by logistics operators. Access to reliable and sufficient electricity, timely and predictable grid connections, and infrastructure planning that reflects the needs of depot charging and cross-border transport corridors will be essential to support investment in zero-emission road freight transport. CLECAT therefore underlines that energy infrastructure must develop in parallel with the electrification of the transport sector.