

LOGISTICS FOR EUROPE: RETHINKING SUPPLY CHAINS

19 NOVEMBER 2024, NRW REPRESENTATION TO THE EU, BRUSSELS

The third Logistics for Europe event, co-organised by CLECAT and the European Shippers Council (ESC), was held on 19 November 2024, at the Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia in Brussels. The forum brought together shippers, freight forwarders, logistics experts, and European policymakers to explore the key challenges facing European supply chains. Against the backdrop of growing global competition, economic and geopolitical instability, and increasingly stringent EU regulations, the event focused on how the logistics sector can remain competitive, enhance collaboration and innovation, and meet regulatory demands without sacrificing efficiency or cost-effectiveness.

In the welcome panel moderated by **Rogier Elshout**, **Roman Stiftner**, President of **ESC**, and **Willem van der Schalk**, President of **CLECAT**, highlighted the intensifying complexity of global supply chains driven by economic and geopolitical crises. Both presidents emphasised the growing pressures on European businesses to comply with increasingly stringent EU regulations. These rules now



require shippers and freight forwarders to report not just financial information but also social and environmental data, adding administrative and economic burdens. Despite these challenges, they stressed that collaboration between industry stakeholders and proactive policymaking at the EU level is crucial for ensuring the resilience and competitiveness of European supply chains. The session underscored the importance of finding a balance between adhering to EU Green Deal objectives and maintaining the operational efficiency and economic strength of the logistics sector.

Fotini Ioannidou, Director of the Waterborne Directorate at DG MOVE, delivered a keynote address that explored the rapidly evolving global landscape and its implications for European transport and logistics. Drawing on insights from the Draghi, Letta, and Niinistö reports, she outlined the EU's strategic priorities in fostering a competitive and sustainable logistics sector.

Ms Ioannidou highlighted the role of the upcoming Clean Industrial Deal, expected early next year, with the aim to invest more in the EU in clean and strategic technologies and in energy

intensive industries. She reaffirmed the Commission’s commitment to supporting European industry through digitalisation, the reduction of administrative burden and simplifying legislation. The objective set out by EC President von der Leyen is to reduce reporting obligations by at least 25% – and for SMEs at least 35%. She emphasised the need for Europe to invest strategically in infrastructure and innovation to safeguard its economic security and global standing in an increasingly competitive environment.

FUTURE-PROOFING EU POLICY

The first session delved into the challenges posed by geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions, and climate change. **Mika Aaltola, MEP**, stressed that resilience is not a passive trait but an active strategy requiring a mindset shift across people and industries. He warned that Europe’s growing reliance on regulatory power must be balanced with practical measures to ensure its competitiveness. Referring to the Draghi report, Aaltola called for cohesion among EU Member States and underscored the urgency of fixing domestic political weaknesses to address external threats effectively.



Tomas Arvidsson, Member of the Economic and Social Committee and CLECAT Board member, spoke about the significant administrative burden placed on businesses and the need for decisive political leadership to foster innovation and free trade. He argued for a regulatory framework that incentivise positive change and reduce barriers, noting that Europe must utilise its tools effectively to compete with global powers. Both speakers stressed the importance of transparent and fair-trade practices to strengthen trusted supply chains.



Klaus Dohrmann, VP, Global Head of Innovation & Trend Research at DHL Customer Solutions & Innovation presented a dynamic vision of how AI is revolutionising supply chains, emphasising its role in optimising operations, enhancing sustainability, and fostering resilience. Highlighting insights from DHL’s Logistics Trend Radar and innovation ecosystem, he showcased how AI enables precise inventory management, demand forecasting, and resource planning,

reducing costs and improving productivity. Dr. Dohrmann underscored the importance of collaboration in innovation, with DHL’s global innovation centers driving partnerships that accelerate solutions for challenges such as decarbonisation, digitalisation, and next-generation connectivity. His keynote offered a forward-thinking perspective on how AI can ensure sustainable, agile, and competitive supply chains for the future.

INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION FOR SECURE SUPPLY CHAINS

The second session focused on security challenges in the logistics sector, from drug trafficking to cyberthreats, and how collaboration between public and private sectors can address these issues. **Frank Heijmann**, from the Dutch Permanent Representation to the EU, highlighted the vulnerabilities in supply chains that organised crime continues to exploit. He emphasised the need for increased visibility and end-to-end responsibility among supply chain actors to counteract these threats effectively.

Enrika Naujoké, CEO of CustomsClear, underscored the importance of regulatory education and compliance, particularly in light of heightened controls stemming from the war in Ukraine. She called for more accessible resources and information, especially for SMEs, to navigate complex regulations.

Albert Veenstra, Professor of Trade and Logistics, Rotterdam School of management Erasmus University, highlighted the interplay between security and logistics efficiency, noting that supply chain mapping and the alignment of regulations like the EUDR with logistics operations are crucial. He stressed that the introduction of new technologies in ports could increase system vulnerabilities, necessitating stronger public-private partnerships.

Lamia Kerdjoudj Belkaid, Secretary General of FEPORT, advocated for stronger public-private partnerships, such as the European Ports Alliance, as a means of fostering effective communication and coordinated responses to security challenges. She noted that while technological advancements, such as improved container scanners, offer solutions, they cannot address all vulnerabilities, particularly in the face of increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks.

RETHINKING SUPPLY CHAINS FOR RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY



The third session explored how companies can balance compliance with EU sustainability regulations while maintaining operational resilience and competitiveness. **Katja Idsinga-Schellaars**, Director Global Customs and Compliance at TEVA described the dual challenges and opportunities presented by sustainability initiatives, noting that shifts from air to maritime transport demand better logistical planning. She argued that businesses need to embrace sustainability as a strategic advantage rather than a compliance burden.

Nancy Lindenhovius Compliance Officer, Wilmar Europe Holdings, raised concerns about the lack of clarity in EU regulations such as the EUDR, which often penalise compliant companies while laggards face fewer consequences. She stressed the need for coherent legislation that aligns with industry practices to avoid unintended disruptions in global supply chains.

Avra Tzeveleki, Director CSR Europe, CEVA Logistics highlighted the importance of supporting SMEs through simplified regulatory frameworks and partnerships with larger companies. She shared CEVA's approach to helping smaller suppliers navigate complex legislation by leveraging its resources and expertise.



Luc Pfennings, Senior Manager at KPMG Netherlands, highlighted the administrative burden associated with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). However, he also emphasised the potential long-term benefits these frameworks could bring to society and to EU companies that achieve compliance.

The session concluded with a call for stronger collaboration across the industry to address shared challenges and ensure sustainability becomes a collective effort rather than a competitive one.

CLOSING REMARKS

Roman Stiftner and **Willem van der Schalk** closed the event by thanking all participants, speakers, and organisers for their contributions. They reiterated the importance of continued collaboration between industry stakeholders and policymakers to tackle the challenges posed by global competition, complex EU legislation, and the need for sustainable, resilient supply chains.

In his final remarks, Willem van der Schalk unveiled CLECAT's newly published [Guide on the Application of ISO 14083](#), a vital resource designed to help freight forwarders calculate and report greenhouse gas emissions accurately. The guide aims to enhance transparency and sustainability in global supply chains, supporting the EU's decarbonisation objectives.