



Position of the European Sea Ports Organisation on the draft report of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) on a European Strategy for critical raw materials (2021/2011(INI))

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The European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) welcomes the recently published draft report of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) on *a European Strategy for critical raw materials (2021/2011(INI))*.

Having a European Strategy for critical raw materials is very relevant for Europe's ports. About 75% of Europe's trade with the rest of the world and more than one third of intra-European trade are shipped through its seaports. Critical raw materials (CRM), often originating from non-European countries, mostly arrive in Europe through ports, and are subsequently processed in industrial and energy sites located either in the port or further inland. Ports also function as important storage places for CRM's and as centres of circularity aiming to recycle and reuse CRM's. **Ports can therefore be considered as genuine hubs for CRM's.**

Ports, including the industrial and energy clusters they accommodate, are dependent on the availability and supply of CRM's and other essential materials and resources. The supply of adequate amounts of CRM's are also crucial to make the ongoing green and digital transition of Europe's economy happen. ESPO therefore supports the aim of the Commission's *Action Plan on Critical Raw Materials (COM(2020)0474)* to pay increasingly attention to **ensuring adequate CRM flows to Europe as well as robust and resilient CRM supply chains.**

European ports are aware that the reuse and recycling of products and materials can play a significant role in ensuring the availability of CRM's for the European economy. Many ports in Europe already host facilities for the reuse and recycling of products and materials, and are developing themselves together with relevant market players into centres of circularity. In this context, European ports agree with the draft ITRE report that industrial CRM recycling processes still need considerable investments in collection and recovery infrastructure. The Commission should therefore ensure adequate funding opportunities in order for these sectors to keep on growing and effectively contribute to Europe's CRM ambitions.

Ports believe that stockpiling could indeed be part of the solution in order to deal with sudden disruptions in the supply chains of CRM's. Many ports already host critical stocks of resources for the European economy, and are currently witnessing a change from accommodating stocks of fossil resources to new kinds of resources. In this context, ports agree with the draft ITRE report that **stockpiling should be part of the Commission's action plan on critical raw materials**. As critical infrastructures that are at the crossroads of supply chains and accommodating industrial and energy clusters, **ports can be ideal locations to store strategic stocks of CRM's and other essential goods**. It goes without saying that ensuring the proper amount of storage facilities for CRM's will require investments. The Commission should therefore actively support the construction of new storage facilities or the adaptation of existing ones to ensure that appropriate levels of CRM's can be stored to deal with any disruptive shocks to CRM supply chains.

Finally, European ports share the view of the draft ITRE report that, when developing policies to secure the supply of raw materials and resources for the European economy, the EU should not only focus on CRM's, as defined in the Commission's Action Plan on Critical Raw Materials, but **should also pay close attention to a broader group of primary and secondary resources**, as there is an increasing scarcity of several key resources (such as steel and plastics, to name a few).



The European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) represents the port authorities, port associations and port administrations of the seaports of 22 Member States of the European Union and Norway at political level. ESPO has also observer members in Albania, Iceland, Israel, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. ESPO is the principal interface between the European seaport authorities and the European institutions. In addition to representing the interests of European ports, ESPO is a knowledge network which brings together professionals from the port sector and national port organisations. ESPO was created in 1993.