

NEWOPERA PRIZE FOR RAIL FREIGHT AND INTERMODALITY

The **rail freight** student competition

Call for abstracts 2026

EURNEX, the European Rail Research Network of Excellence, is presenting the NEWOPERA Prize in its inaugural competition for outstanding research in **rail freight and intermodality**. The idea and funding for this award originated from NEWOPERA, which was recently dissolved and transferred its remaining funds and the responsibility for organizing the prize to EURNEX.

This award invites contributions from any academic discipline that addresses challenges or opportunities in rail freight, regardless of the primary field of study. We seek exceptional research that offers fresh perspectives on the future of rail freight transportation.

Eligibility conditions

- **PhD Category:** Former doctoral students from any European University from any discipline whose research touches upon rail freight systems
- **Master's Category:** Former Master's students from any European University with completed thesis projects that incorporate rail freight elements
- **Eligibility Period:** Theses successfully defended between January 1st 2025, and June 31st, 2026, are eligible for submission

Research Focus Areas

We invite submissions from all disciplines that engage with **rail freight in any context**.

Research must meaningfully address or incorporate aspects of rail freight systems, technologies, operations, policies, and/or impacts.

Evaluation Committee:

The evaluation committee is composed of a selection of members from EURNEX's General Assembly (47 members). For each category, the EURNEX Standing Committee: Marion Berbineau, Andrew Smith, and Armando Carrillo will shortlist 5 candidates. Each shortlisted abstract will be reviewed by at least 3 independent experts, with input from industry specialists sought where required. The full text of the thesis may be requested at any point during the review process.

Awards and Recognition

- **PhD Category:**
 - Winner: €2,800 + Visibility Package
 - Finalist: €1,500 + Visibility Package
- **Master's Category:**
 - Winner: €1,200 + Visibility Package
 - Finalist: €500 + Visibility Package

Industry Visibility Package includes:

- Presentation opportunity at EURNEX general assembly
- Publication of research abstract in EURNEX communications channels

Abstract Template (max 4 pages, including references used in the text, tables, graphs and pictures)

All submissions must follow this template format:

1. **TITLE OF RESEARCH:** [Clear and concise title]
2. **KEYWORDS:** List 3-5 keywords relevant to your research
3. **AUTHOR INFORMATION:**
 - First name and last name:
 - Affiliation (university, entity)
 - Degree Program: [PhD or Master]
 - Email:
 - Thesis Supervisor:
 - Date of Thesis Defense:
4. **RESEARCH QUESTION/OBJECTIVES:**
State your main research question and objectives
5. **METHODOLOGY:**
Describe your research approach and methods
6. **KEY FINDINGS/RESULTS:**
Summarise your main results or expected outcomes
7. **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS:**
Explain the significance and practical applications of your research
8. **REFERENCES**
List of bibliographic references

Submission Requirements

- Abstract length: Maximum 4 pages
- Format: PDF document
- File naming convention: LastName_FirstName_Category_2025.pdf (e.g., Smith_Jane_PhD_2026.pdf)

Key Dates

- **Submission Deadline:** October 15, 2026 (23:59 CET)
- **Winners Announcement:** November 2026 (4 abstracts will be selected: 2 master's and 2 PhDs)
- **Awards Ceremony:** End of the year 2026 (Specific date and venue to be announced)

Evaluation Criteria

Our Scientific Committee will assess all submissions according to the following criteria:

1. **Quality of Research (50%)**
 - Methodological rigor and consistency
 - Originality and innovation in approach
 - Clarity of presentation and argumentation
 - Academic soundness and thoroughness
2. **Relevance to Rail Freight Challenges (20%)**
 - Alignment with current and emerging rail freight challenges
 - Contribution to addressing key sectoral needs
 - Enhancement of rail freight competitiveness
3. **Practical Feasibility and Implementation Potential (15%)**
 - Realistic applicability in industry settings
 - Implementation readiness and pathways
 - Consideration of practical constraints and enablers
4. **Potential Impact (15%)**
 - Scale and significance of potential benefits
 - Breadth of impact across the sector
 - Long-term sustainability of proposed solutions

Evaluation Process

Submissions will undergo a rigorous two-stage evaluation by a distinguished committee:

1. **Initial Screening:** All abstracts will be reviewed for relevance, clarity, and alignment with competition themes. EURNEX Standing Committee: Marion Berbineau, Andrew Smith, and Armando Carrillo will shortlist 5 candidates for each category.
2. **Final Evaluation:** Shortlisted submissions will be assessed based on the abovementioned criteria by at least 3 independent experts, with input from industry specialists sought where required. The full text of the thesis may be requested at any point during the review process.

How to Submit

Please send your abstract to prizes@eurnex.eu with the subject line "NEWOPERA Prize Submission - [PhD/MSc] - [Last Name]"

Contact Information

<https://www.eurnex.org/studentcomp/>

For inquiries, please contact:

info@eurnex.eu