

Multimodal Year 2018 – The Future of Intermodal

PRESS RELEASE

23 May 2018

Multimodality to solve sustainability issues of freight logistics

No single mode of transport can satisfy the needs of society and the economic actors to move goods on its own. Moreover, whatever the single modalities of freight transport can do technologically to fix their shortcomings, it will not be sufficient to mend the multitude of sustainability issues that plague them today. Transport development was largely mode-based during the past several decades. The conviction is strong and underpinned by an increasing volume of evidence, that whatever technology can offer it is easily surpassed by the solution a synchronized cooperation of the different transport modes can deliver in jointly fulfilling the greater mission of moving goods.

The Multimodal Freight Conference co-organized on 16 May by UIRR, ERA and the European Commission explored these possibilities by examining

- what intermodality can deliver to Europe's economy, if aided by a Combined Transport Directive that is presently under revision,
- what role the different modes can play in delivering intermodal transport solutions in order to make all of transport less burdensome for society,
- how an infrastructure, completed to the requirements of the 21st Century, as well as the digital initiatives currently under way will complement it to make multimodal transport more efficient and competitive, and finally
- what the future does hold in terms of customer behaviour, technological mega-trends and new solutions of multimodal transport.



The four panels around which the conference was organized brought together regulators and legislators from the European institutions, representatives of the various modalities of transport – rail, road, inland waterways, shortsea and intermodal, major players of logistics like DHL or Samskip, shippers such as BASF, Covestro and technology supplier BMW, digital innovators like Logit One and hosts of academics from Austria and Italy to complement the big picture.

It was agreed that intermodality could indeed deliver more if the Combined Transport Directive and other modal legislation were improved to rebalance the regulatory framework, if the barriers of interoperability in the rail network were addressed, and if a range of digital tools to improve the quality of services – permitted by new technologies – were implemented. The social dimension in the highly competitive market also needs to be addressed. Responsible corporate behaviour is the best remedy for social dumping. Delivering successful multimodal transport options requires investment into the EU infrastructure, which is also a key factor for the safe transportation of dangerous goods and risk management.

One theme emerged from all the debates throughout the day: all modes of transport will have to play a role in meeting the challenges of our times, whether economic, social, environmental, and/or technological. Thanks to the fruitful discussions at this conference, and other debates during the Year of Multimodality, the European Union might take the first step towards becoming the region of multimodality.



Josef Doppelbauer, Executive Director of ERA said:

In an era of dramatic change in the world, with exponential progress in technology and an urgent need to combat climate change and road congestion, we must bundle our forces to create multimodal freight transport in Europe. He quoted the Chinese proverb: “When the winds of change blow, some people build walls, others build windmills.”



UIRR President, **Ralf-Charley Schultze**, added:

Thanks to the use of standardised loading units, which hold the cargo, intermodal transport enables the easiest transshipment of any type of goods between the different collaborating modes to create a multimodal transport solution. Therefore, the promotion of multimodal solutions is the most effective to advance the cause of intermodal transport through the measures discussed at today’s conference.

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