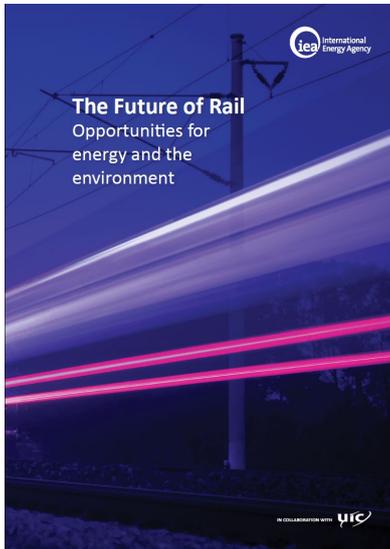


IEA: "Intermodal is the key to the future of rail freight"



Rail was found to be among "the most efficient and lowest emitting modes of transport". With a strong reliance on electricity, it is also the most energy diverse. Rail networks carry 7% of freight transport, but account for only 2% of energy use in the transport sector.

"Aggressive, strategic deployment of rail freight can lead CO₂ emissions in global transport to peak in the late 2030s. In this case global rail freight activity across all categories will nearly triple in 2050 from 2017 levels." – was the primary finding of the recently published report of the International Energy Agency (IEA) titled: The Future of Rail Freight¹.

For freight rail, a key opportunity is to closely connect with other transport modes and to insert these optimally within the logistics supply chain - intermodal integration. Containerisation and standardisation of the size of freight loading units are essential to facilitate door-to-door intermodal solutions in conjunction with road.

For Europe, IEA made the following recommendation: "Overcoming the barriers of intermodal development in Europe will require planning driven by regional entities and national governments and involves inter-ministerial collaboration."

The Report's findings came as no surprise: the low environmental footprint of rail freight has been long known. Regarding the role of the intermodal sector in the development of rail freight in North America intermodal shipments even overtook conventional wagons within overall rail freight during 2018 in the performance statistics.

Intermodal transport is the optimal interconnector between the modes for a wide range of cargo types that travel exclusively on road today. With a certain reduction of demand for transporting classic rail freight commodities and the parallel need to reduce the ecological burden of transport, the role of intermodal comes to the forefront of attention as the ideal tool of mitigating the burden constituted by longer distance road transport.

The study has been realised in collaboration with UIC. UIRR and its North American counterpart IANA² also contributed to the Report.

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Ralf-Charley Schultze

"The ongoing amendment of the Combined Transport Directive (92/106) offers the best chance for European Union governments to act along the IEA's recommendations. This should take the shapes of a compromise of the Council general approach adopted on 3 December last year in several aspects such as the definition of combined transport operation, state aid and reporting provisions." – pointed out UIRR President Ralf-Charley Schultze.

Who is UIRR?

Founded in 1970, the **International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport (UIRR)** represents the interests of European road-rail Combined Transport Operators and Transhipment Terminal Managers.

Road-Rail Combined Transport (CT) is a system of freight forwarding which is based on efficiently and economically inserting electric rail into long-distance (road) transport chains through the use of intermodal loading units (ILU).

¹ <https://www.iea.org/futureofrail/>

² The Intermodal Association of North America (<https://www.intermodal.org/>)