

UIRR, THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL COMBINED TRANSPORT

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► UIRR stands for International Union of Combined Road Rail Transport Companies and is to be considered as "the" voice of Combined Transport (CT) in Europe. Created in 1970, the UIRR is structured in a decentralised way, with tasks devoted to its two parallel, interactive levels:

The member-companies, a network of presently 19 undertakings, active all over Europe (14 EU and non-EU countries) They are the actual interfaces between road and rail and to this effect

- organize and market CT services for the carrying out of which they purchase train capacities from railway undertakings, mostly at their own financial risk
- control a large numbers of wagons, in ownership or long-term lease contracts
- run (and own in specific cases) many transshipment yards (terminals)

They generally collaborate with each other on specific axes in order to come through joint commercial efforts to rapidly reaching a demand level enabling them to operate multi-weekly when not multi-daily full or shuttle trains. Their major marketing asset is to be compact, close-to-the-market entities, and they have as their policy to reinvest occurring profits into service enlargement and/or improvement. Together the UIRR members are to be credited with over 50% of all freight volumes brought to rail in Europe, and even over 70% in unaccompanied regime; they also handle most of Europe's Rolling-Road trains.

The so-called liaison office in Brussels, with its triple role of

- promoting CT in all possible forms

(lobby, publications, statements,...)

- coordinating members' activities as well as EU co-financed and other projects (Marco Polo programme, PCRD)
- carrying out "upon request" analyses and research work.

In close cooperation both these levels have developed important tools to the final benefit of the clients such as standard messages and uniform codes applicable to clients and terminals, IT devices with CESAR to gradually harmonize customers' booking and status requests, General Transport conditions that set uniform rights, obligations and liability rules and guidelines aimed at improving security, but also major achievements in the technical and operational areas.

Becoming a UIRR member means for an applying operator to be at once part of a Europe-wide network, and to have the opportunity to jointly conceive, promote and even market trains in order to rapidly reach a demand level that enables to carry out full trains and hence benefit from the economies of scale principle. These assets find their translation in UIRR's traffic records. In 2007, 2.9million consignments were handled, equaling 5.9million TEU or 45 billion tkms of goods carried by rail instead of by road (removal, over 750 kms average distance, of 10,000 HGV's per working day).

As a particular example, the transport corridor between the Benelux-countries, Germany and Turkey has gained firmer importance since the enlargement of the EU. The growth potential for freight transport is high for Turkey and a significant part of the road traffic could

be shifted on rail, especially from/to Germany, which is one of the largest trade partners of Turkey with growing tendency. Developing services from/to Turkey is one of UIRR priorities' which is in line with its member companies' increasing interest in the whole South-Eastern European region. An illustration of this is the SEEIS project supported by the Marco Polo programme of the European Commission, to which four UIRR member companies participate. This project includes a service called 'Turkey express', which is a part of the corridor IV of the TEN-T, a combination of the current Adria Express train (München – Ljubljana) and a new Bosphorus-Europe-Express direct train introduced in March 2008 between Ljubljana and Halkali, integrating this latter terminal into the European shuttle network of Kombiverkehr and Adria Kombi and thus connecting Turkey to the key European economic regions. Prior to that, in October 2007, these two companies had created Europe Intermodal in Turkey, this operator supporting their supply of efficient intermodal services.

In a context of increasing road congestion and all of its negative environmental and economic consequences, Turkish Authorities have a major role to play by setting up a comprehensive intermodal strategy including financial and regulatory incentives to foster intermodal transport. They may rely on the determination of UIRR and its member companies to contribute at their respective levels to the Turkish potential becoming also a CT success story to the benefit of all stakeholders, Turkish road hauliers and transport commissioners in particular. ■

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