



## 2018 European Year of Multimodality



In this article UIRR shares with us their vision on multimodality and the importance of cooperation in the supply chain.

Transport policy has historically been approached separately, from the perspective of each different transport mode: road, rail, inland navigation, short sea shipping. The cooperative functioning, the combination of these modes of transport has typically not been a consideration at the time of setting the rules. Yet, multiple modes of transport, or multimodality, cannot effectively function without a policy-making and a regulatory framework that takes this type of collaboration into account.

In times where excessive carbon emissions, pollution and noise, congestion and accidents, road degradation and a driver shortage make the freight transport status hardly sustainable, deploying more intermodal transport is apparently unavoidable.

The cargo should be loaded into intermodal loading units – containers, swap bodies or (craneable) semi-trailers – which make transshipment between the modes quick and easy. Containerization is needed to access intermodal transport, which has the capability to efficiently insert non-road modes of land transport into long(er) distance transport chains. The use of freight trains, as well as vessels of inland waterways and short sea shipping can thereafter meaningfully enhance the energy efficiency, while reducing the adverse side-effects of the logistics chain. Intermodality also offers highly productive jobs and eliminates the work/life balance concerns associated with long-distance trucking.

The collaboration of transport modes, embodied in intermodality, requires harmonized documentation and interconnected IT systems to exist between the various actors who collaborate to make intermodality happen. Shippers, the planners of transport operations, must also learn how intermodal works, what its peculiarities are, and how it can be incorporated into the logistics chains entrusted to their care.

Transport policy makers in Member States as well as in the European Union have been increasingly coming to the realization that climate change and the other anomalies of excessive road haulage can only be curtailed through using more intermodal transport. The ongoing amendment of the existing regulation serves the purpose to make intermodal transport competitive even before the

necessary legislative corrections to the framework conditions of the various modes are enacted. The upcoming digitalization-minded European legislative initiatives, to be unveiled as part of the Third Mobility Package in May 2018, will create the single e-transport document.

Through these legislative solutions, as well as a number of digital services planned by the European Commission, using more intermodal transport will become much easier.

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