

# 45-foot Square Swap-Bodies and the Revision of Directive 96/53/EC

December 2011

The EU Directive (96/53/EC) governing the weight and dimension of road vehicles is due for revision this year. The European Commission has duly initiated a public consultation on the topic with a deadline of end of February.

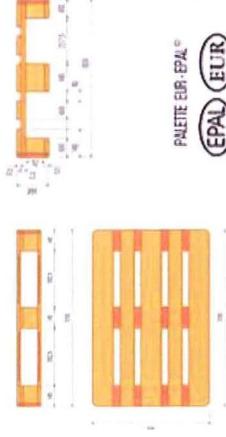
The extension of road vehicle dimensions, generally speaking, contravenes with the overriding aim to meaningfully improve the performance of road safety in Europe. Longer vehicles and aerodynamic elements would only have some advantages for road vehicles travelling over long distances outside urbanised areas. UIRR shares the EC's conviction that road transport should be replaced over longer distances (of 300km or more) by sustainable modes, such as electric rail or forms of navigation.

The considerations to improve safety, the energy efficiency and the environmental performance of European land transport would require that **road haulage be specialised to carry out short-distance positioning traffic** of loading units. In case wishing to improve safety, energy and environmental efficiency **a reduction in maximum allowed speed and European harmonisation to 80 km/h are more effective** than aerodynamics or size extension.

The only change of road vehicle dimensions that UIRR could support, in the spirit of the above detailed logic, is an **extension of semi-trailer length by the centimetres.**

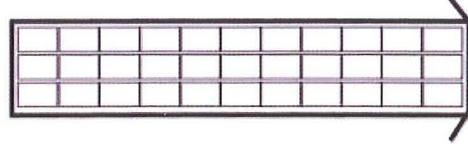


45-foot European swap-body/container: optimized for Europallets



The Europallet

These 12 centimetres would be needed, as compared to today's maximum allowed length, to carry a **45-foot square edged swap-body** optimised to Europallets, which is the basic packaging unit for a wide variety of cargo in Europe. A 45-foot (13,72 metre-long) swap-body can optimally replace the more costly shipping of semi-trailers on rail.



33 Europallets  
1.2 x 0.8 m

## 1800 tons intermodal train in Europe

A new shuttle service has been established by Kombiverkehr, the biggest European intermodal operator. This train offers three services per week in both directions between Duisburg, the biggest intermodal hub in Central Europe, and Poznan in West Poland. In Duisburg, the ports of Rotterdam, Antwerpen and Zeebrugge can feeder into that service – either by regular shuttle train service or by inland waterway offered in European intermodal rail services. In addition, many places in North Europe connect regularly with intermodal rail services into Duisburg. The terminal in Poznan distributes the loading units into various connections within Poland and to a place at the Polish-Russian border. This regular shuttle train offers high weight capacity: a gross weight of 1800 t, realised with this train, is the maximum offered in European intermodal rail services.