

Weights and dimensions to aid modal-shift

The European Commission's 2011 Transport White Paper¹ contains the ambitious goal of shifting 30% of longer distance road transport² to sustainable modes by 2030, and 50% by 2050. Achieving this aim will not only require a major paradigm shift from consignors and logistics companies, but every piece of land transport legislation should be scrutinised from this perspective.

The **overriding intention of the Commission to preserve and enhance compatibility with intermodal transport** – declared as part of its proposed changes to the Directive concerning the weights and dimensions of commercial road vehicles [96/53] [COM(2013)195] – is to be welcomed. UIRR's position paper³ on the Commission proposal, which was adopted by the Board of Directors on 5 July 2013, has been drafted in the very same spirit with the following **main conclusions**:

- Welcome to the proposed extension of maximum allowed semi-trailer length (by 15cm) to accommodate road haulage of 45-foot rectangular swap-bodies in Combined Transport operations,
- Clarify the conditions of the 44t gross vehicle weight allowance of trucks performing a cross-border positioning leg in a CT operation,
- Ensure the CT compatibility of trucks equipped with aerodynamic devices that protrude beyond the presently authorised maximum dimensions,
- Prohibit the cross-border circulation of megatrucks by removing any linguistic ambiguities in this regards from the presently effective text,
- Define special reporting and enforcement obligation with regards to the megatruck trials conducted in various Member States,
- Effectively prevent overloading and the exceeding of exterior dimensions of road vehicles, including the width, length and height of trucks, and
- Use the definition of Combined Transport from Directive 92/106 instead of inventing the new term of "intermodal transport".

Combined Transport offers a carbon footprint which is at least 75% smaller than pure road transport, which is multiple times better than what is achievable through the aerodynamics- and megatruck-circulation measures proposed by the Commission. And road-rail Combined Transport is also much more energy efficient, while also offering a far superior safety record as compared to road haulage.

Subsequently, the Members of UIRR would like to caution the European Legislator not to adopt legislation which endangers in any way the proliferation of this both ecologically and economically most sustainable method of long-distance transport.

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Martin Burkhardt

"The transport sector typically operates with technology designed for a very long lifetime – especially if compared to everyday consumer products. The regulatory framework of transport, including that of weights and dimensions, should be correspondingly stable enabling standardisation and reliability of the physical parameters in order to facilitate the necessary long-term investments." – observed UIRR Director General, Mr Martin Burkhardt on the occasion of publishing the position paper.

Who is UIRR?

Founded in 1970, the **International Union of Combined Road-Rail Transport Companies** (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).

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¹ http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/strategies/2011_white_paper_en.htm

² Covering distances of 300km or more

³ <http://www.uirr.com/en/media-centre/press-releases-and-position-papers/2013/mediacentre/578-weights-and-dimensions-should-aid-modal-shift.html>