

Combined Transport welcomes the joint ministerial statement

Transport ministers from 15 European Union Member States adopted a joint position paper¹ to call for the EU Commission to launch an initiative in favour of rail freight operators and to promote modal shift towards clean transport at the informal Council of EU Transport Ministers yesterday.

The position paper – adopted in the context of the decarbonisation objectives embodied in the European Green Deal – calls for the following actions:

- The EU Commission should quickly launch a study on the European Union schemes to support rail operators, notably rail freight operators with the view to achieve a concrete modal shift from road towards rail transport, and how to migrate towards more innovative and competitive concepts like digital automatic coupling (DAC).
- The innovation and digitalization efforts in favour of rail freight as regards both rail infrastructure and rail freight operators should be reinforced.
- EU rules for financial support offered by Member States to rail freight transport should be simplified and their processing by the European Commission should be swifter.

Intermodal rail – organized by Combined Transport Operators, who also bear the commercial risk for these trains – **makes up half of the EU rail freight traffic**². Combined Transport offers the ideal means by which the cargo carried in trucks can be most efficiently transferred to trains.

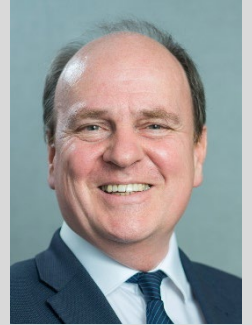
UIRR points out the need to **expand the focus of the study** to be conducted by the European Commission **to include support measures for Combined Transport Operators** in their capacity as the producers and operators of intermodal rail freight. In case of typical intermodal trains, the lead railway undertaking is a supplier of the Combined Transport Operator for rail traction and organisation, while the financial risk for the train remains with the Combined Transport Operator.

Moreover, for intermodal rail to perform better there is a need to:

- Facilitate a significant investment into the European railway infrastructure,
- Define preferred railway lines for freight trains during the revision of the TEN-T Guidelines Regulation,
- Extend the financial support measures that target railway infrastructure modernization to the development of transshipment terminals, including the construction of new terminals, which serve as the gateways for freight to the rail infrastructure,
- Define an obligation to plan the upgrade of those railway lines where the lack of a P400 loading gauge is the main obstacle to modal shift,
- Reconfirm the loading gauge of every TEN-T railway line used by freight trains, which is to be based on the physical measurement of the profile gauge and the calculation based on a harmonised European algorithm.

¹ https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/20210330_Joint_Position_Paper.pdf

² <http://www.uirr.com/en/media-centre/press-releases-and-position-papers/2020/mediacentre/1675-2020-report-on-combined-transport-in-europe.html>



Ralf-Charley Schultze

"The European road-rail Combined Transport sector enthusiastically greets this position of presently 15 Member States and expresses its strong hope that many more Ministers of Transport of the remaining 12 Member States will decide to join the initiative during the coming days." - commented 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 Transshipment 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).