

TEN-T Infrastructure for Combined Transport

The ongoing revision of the TEN-T Regulation to revise the technical parameters for the Trans-European Transportation Infrastructure Network is the ideal opportunity to ensure that the TEN-T infrastructure works properly for rail freight. This is all the more relevant as the European Green Deal foresees the doubling of rail freight's market share. Door-to-door Combined Transport, which depends on rail freight to a large extent, is the ideal replacement for long-distance trucking as its pro-rata energy efficiency is 40-70% better, while leaving behind a carbon footprint that is 60-90% smaller than road haulage¹.

Infrastructure for intermodal freight transport

UIRR strongly supports the European Commission's proposed TEN-T Regulation amendment, and specifically:

- The **obligatory rail infrastructure parameters** for train length (740m), axle load (22,5t), P400 loading gauge, electrification and interoperability of signalling systems (ERTMS) along the entire core and comprehensive network.
- The creation of **adequate railway infrastructure capacity** (i) to ensure a definite number of train paths for 740-metre-long trains per hour on every TEN-T line, (ii) to elevate the punctuality of freight trains to 90%, as well as (iii) to enable the crossing of an internal railway border of the European Union within 15 minutes.
- The mandatory **modernisation of existing intermodal transshipment terminals**, the obligation to **study the available capacity of intermodal terminals** and the **construction of intermodal terminals** where capacity is found to be lacking.

Rail freight as a crucial component of door-to-door Combined Transport

Every second freight train in the European Union carries intermodal loading units. Since the mid-90s the share of intermodal rail within rail freight has grown dynamically and passed the 50% mark in 2019². During this time cargo transported in trucks was on the increase, while the demand for transportation of classic bulk rail freight commodities has been on the decline. The intermodal transshipment technique enables the efficient shifting of cargo currently carried in trucks to trains for the longest segment of their journey.

Nearly 90% of intermodal freight trains crossed at least one border, the average length was 921km in 2020³. This means that most border crossing freight trains are intermodal trains. Considering that cross-border passenger trains are very small in number, it can be stated that Combined Transport constitutes Europe's dominant type of border-crossing long-distance trains. Hence, the relevance of UIRR's voice on the matter of rail freight infrastructure.



¹ d-fine study, November 2021

² UIC-UIRR report, 2020

³ UIRR Report 2020-21

Combined Transport material in reaching Europe's climate objectives

Door-to-door Combined Transport is a readily available and equivalent alternative to long-distance trucking, which is uniquely capable to reduce the energy need of unimodal road haulage by 40-70%, while leaving behind a 60-90% smaller carbon footprint¹. Through these abilities door-to-door Combined Transport is capable of immediately delivering the 55% reduction of long-distance freight transportation's carbon footprint by 2030 – as prescribed in the European Climate Law.

Moreover, Zero-Carbon Combined Transport is technically feasible already today. Zero-Carbon Combined Transport does not require imported alternative fuels, rather it is powered on renewable electricity produced on the continent. Europe could realistically achieve the complete decarbonisation of freight transport through door-to-door Zero-Carbon Combined Transport by the 2050 deadline.

Combined Transport reduces Europe's energy dependency

An unrivalled reduction of Europe's reliance on imported fossil fuels is also enabled by door-to-door Combined Transport. Intermodal transshipment facilitates the efficient insertion of electric rail freight into long-distance transport-chains on an industrial scale already today for every kind of cargo carried in trucks powered by fossil fuel burning engines. By drastically reducing trucked kilometres in Europe through using more Combined Transport, the continent could save many millions of tons of imported oil annually.

Combined Transport improves work/life balance

The lack of truck drivers has caused significant difficulties for European economic actors during the past several years. The lack of willingness of European workers to take up driving a truck mainly affects long-distance road haulage, which comes with a harsh work/life balance. Combined Transport road legs cover short distances performed by day-trucking. Subsequently, more Combined Transport could materially contribute to easing the driver shortage by reducing long-distance trucking, while creating more jobs in short-haul day-trucking that offers superior working conditions, a better work/life balance and improved labour efficiency.

Combined Transport has needs

Modal shift has been a policy objective of the European Union since 2001. Legislative support for the policy measures that are needed to deliver modal shift has lagged over these years. Subsequently, transportation became the only sector of the economy that increased its carbon emissions. The market share of road haulage has reached an unsustainable 76% (half of which is long-distance trucking), which will need to be drastically reduced if Europe wishes to achieve its security-, energy-, climate- and labour-policy objectives.

The legislative needs of Combined Transport should therefore be supported by lawmakers. The first such instance is the currently ongoing revision of the TEN-T Guidelines Regulation. **UIRR calls on the European Union Member States and the European Parliament to support the development of transportation infrastructure for rail freight and intermodal transport as proposed by the European Commission in the revision of the TEN-T Regulation.**

To enact the legislation that will deliver the much-needed modal shift, **further opportunities** will follow in the coming 12 months concerning (i) the state aid guidelines for railways, (ii) the Weights and Dimensions Directive, (iii) the Combined Transport Directive, (iv) the Rail Freight Corridor Regulation, and (v) the CountEmissionsEU Regulation.

