

Energy Crisis: the way out is through Combined Transport

Brussels, 12 March 2026 — An energy crisis is engulfing Europe today. During the 1970s, the same questions were asked:

- How can European logistics chains be reliably upheld on a continent without oil?
- How can the European economy be kept moving?

The answer is the same as in 1975, when the first Combined Transport Directive¹ was adopted: a dramatic energy efficiency improvement and a meaningful decoupling of land transport can be achieved through door-to-door Combined Transport.

Following the European Parliament's decisive vote in January, today the Member States of the European Union face an important decision: **should the legislative work on modernising the Combined Transport Directive² be continued?**

The answer is clearly **YES!**

The unparalleled capabilities of door-to-door Combined Transport:

- 70% less energy needed per tonne-kilometre – with a significant upside potential.
- Fully electrified industrial-scale heavy freight transport possible without too many batteries – using Made in Europe technologies.
- Compatible with the truckload volumes of any type of cargo carried in trucks today.

What is needed today from the EU co-legislators to release the full potential of door-to-door Combined Transport and to boost Europe's resilience by loosening its dependency on imported oil?

- ✓ **A modernised Combined Transport Directive** – pursuant to the sector's roadmap³.
- ✓ **The Weights and Dimensions Directive** upholding complete interoperability and compatibility of road haulage with the other modes of transport⁴.

The Combined Transport shuttle train network of Europe is made up of 1.000 daily departures already today, offering connections between 1.300 terminals scattered throughout the continent. Electric-powered intermodal freight trains could double their capacity on short notice if gaining priority like energy-transport trains during the 2022 energy crisis. This would remove the oil import burden of as many as 50.000 diesel-powered trucks, each of which consumes about 300 litres of diesel every day, or nearly 3 billion litres of diesel annually. This alone could save Europe the need to import about 10 million tonnes of crude oil every year!

The doubling of Combined Transport performance could then be repeated again until 2030 and once more by 2040, saving Europe from an excessive exposure to imported crude oil, and thus boosting our economy's competitiveness and resilience.



"We are in dire straits and door-to-door Combined Transport, as the backbone of the European transport system, could considerably contribute to achieving Europe's energy efficiency and import oil decoupling objectives. Also in terms of resilience and competitiveness the solution is obvious. The prerequisites are fully in the hands of the EU co-legislators: the European Parliament and the Council led today by the Cyprus Presidency." – pointed out UIRR Director General, 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 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 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/1975/130/oj/eng>

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31992L0106&qid=1773141067933>

³ <https://www.uirr.com/position-papers-publications/position-paper-combined-transport-directive-revision>

⁴ <https://www.uirr.com/publications-position-papers/joint-statement-on-weights-dimensions>