

Freight transport in Europe

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PURPOSE: to set out an agenda for the EU's freight transport system.

CONTENT: freight transport is fundamental to the EU's competitiveness. Well organised freight transport contributes to sustainable and energy efficient operations and strengthens cohesion by enabling businesses across the EU to reach peripheral regions. The mid-term review of the 2001 White Paper on transport forecast a 50% growth of freight transport in terms of tkm between 2000 and 2020. This alone raises a number of important challenges including:

- road congestion, which negatively affects costs, time and fuel consumption;
- the need to reduce pollutant emissions and noise;
- a high dependency on imported fossil fuels;
- the needs to offer high safety and security standards; and
- the need to recruit well qualified and well trained staff.

To address these challenges, the European Commission is launching, simultaneously, a series of policy initiatives that coincide with last year's mid-term review of the 2001 White Paper on transport. They are:

- **The Freight Logistics Plan:** This sets out a series of actions to promote freight and traffic management in a sustainable manner, the simplification of administrative processes, and a review of loading standards with a view to reviewing Directive 96/53/EC on vehicle dimensions and weights.
- **A Communication of freight-oriented rail networks:** This report examines ways in which to make rail freight more competitive by, in particular, ensuring lower transit times and increasing rail's reliability and responsiveness to customer requirements.
- **A Communication on a European Ports Policy** (see [INI/2008/2007](#)): This report provides a vision and a toolbox for enhancing the performance of ports as essential hubs in Europe's overall transport system.
- A Commission staff working paper "**Towards a European maritime transport space without barriers**": This paper will kick-start a consultation process on allowing short sea shipping to benefit fully from the EU's internal market.
- A staff working paper on "**Motorways of the Sea**": This describes progress made in developing the Motorways of the Sea and sets out future quality elements.

Particular attention is given to:

- "**Green**" corridors: It is essential that various transport modes, as well as the corridors themselves, are combined allowing freight transport to offer seamless door-to-door services. "Green" corridors should be characterised by a low human and environmental impact. Indeed, rail and waterborne transport modes will be essential components of these green corridors.
- **Infrastructure, means of transport and freight management:** Present and future strategies will focus on the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) and the development of strategically significant trans-national corridors. Other elements include the efficient use of available facilities. The removal of operational and commercial barriers that currently obstruct access to the infrastructure will also be sought.
- **Simplification:** Particular attention will be given to the use of multi-modal transport chains and a single interface point for administrative requirements in freight.
- **Quality:** Rail, in particular, will need to improve its performance and waterborne transport modes requires enhancement.

To improve the efficiency and sustainability of freight transport, the authorities have to create the appropriate framework conditions and support the trend towards co-modality and sustainability. This includes adopting appropriate legislative measures, mandating technical standardisation, providing political and financial support and encouraging the promotion of best practices.

The set of policy initiatives introduced in this report point the way to a European freight transport policy that is based on co-modality, Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), green corridors and user orientation.

- **Co-modality:** this requires improving the efficiency, inter-operability and inter-connectivity of rail, maritime, inland waterway transport, air, road transport and related hubs in order to arrive at a fully integrated transport system offering a door-to-door service.
- **Intelligent Transport Systems:** this offers a means with which to improve transport and cargo management and increase the utilisation of the available infrastructure.