Combined transport: support framework for intermodal transport of goods; calculation of external costs savings and generation of aggregated data

2023/0396(COD) - 07/11/2023 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to make freight transport more sustainable by making intermodal freight transport more competitive with road-only transport.

PROPOSED ACT: Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: intermodal transport combines better environmental performance and energy efficiency of rail and waterborne transport with the accessibility and flexibility of road transport and is thus key in enabling the higher uptake of rail and waterborne freight transport. It also enables a more efficient allocation of volumes among transport modes and tackles effectively those road transport external costs which are hard to fully internalise, in particular congestion and accidents.

Council Directive 92/106/EEC established a framework to **encourage the development of intermodal transport**, and in particular combined transport operations. It supports intermodal transport operations which compete with a unimodal road transport, and it is the main legislative act of the Union to incentivise the shift from road freight to lower emission transport modes such as inland waterways, short sea shipping and rail. While Directive 92/106/EEC contributed to the development of the Union's policy on modal shift, its limited scope, insufficient support and shortcomings in the implementation reduced its effectiveness.

It is therefore necessary to ensure that intermodal transport operations in the Union which reduce the external costs by being environmentally friendlier, safer, more energy efficient and causing less congestion than road transport, would become attractive for shippers.

CONTENT: to meet these expectations, the Commission has prepared a new proposal to amend the combined transport Directive.

The objective of the initiative is to refocus the support framework that this Directive creates and thereby **increase the competitiveness of intermodal transport** compared to long-distance road transport to stimulate the shift from road freight to other modes of transport, and thereby to reduce external costs.

The amended Directive applies to all intermodal transport insofar as the national policy frameworks, reporting and terminal transparency are concerned, and establishes a dedicated support framework for the subset of intermodal transport that saves a certain level of external costs.

More specifically, the proposal:

- clarifies the scope of the combined transport Directive by providing the new conditions for operations to qualify as ‘combined transport’;

- introduces an obligation on electronic freight transport information (eFTI) platforms to provide a functionality for **calculating the external costs savings** and **generation of aggregated data** on annual volumes of combined transport;

The proposed revision:

- **increases the efficiency and competitiveness of intermodal transport**. It refocuses support on operations that reduce negative externalities by at least 40% compared with road-only transport operations between the same departure and arrival points;

- introduces an **exemption** from temporary driving bans, such as weekend driving bans for combined transport;

- sets Member States a competitiveness target to reduce by at least 10% the average door-to-door cost of combined transport operations within 7 years, and requires them to put in place the policies needed to achieve this;

- enhances **transparency** of market operation: a new EU gateway for intermodal transport information will provide links to all Member States' national policy frameworks, as well as practical information on measures in place, increasing the transparency of national measures.

Budgetary implications

The proposal raises net costs for the Union Budget of EUR 2 million over the period 2025-2050.