Intermodality and intermodal freight transport, services and sustainability

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Reporting on the Commission's communication on intermodality and intermodal freight transport in the EU, Mr STOCKMANN notes that road transport has substantially increased its share of goods traffic over recent decades at the expense of the railways. This is one of the main reasons why road capacity has already reached its limits on many routes and further serious bottlenecks in the road system are forecast. Under the intermodal approach, door-to-door transport of goods is organised by linking individual modes of transport (rail, road, inland waterways and coastal shipping, but also sea transport and air freight) in such a way as to create atransport chain based on the best possible combination of different modes. By interconnecting all modes of transport, an integrated transport system would be produced which meets society's needs for mobility in a substantially more efficient way than is the case. The combination of all modes of transport into an integrated system is not only a necessity because of the threat of gridlock on the roads and general environmental considerations, for it is an obvious step to take, given the fact that other, more environment-friendly modes of transport such as the railways, inland waterways and coastal shipping have significant spare capacity. The change in approach is now possible because so much progress has been made in telecommunications and information technology. On the other hand, the creation of an intermodal system faces substantial obstacles such as the lack of integration between modes of transport, the distortion of competition owing to variations in the charging of costs, the lack of integration in unimodal networks, the disparities in legal and administrative standards and the poor infrastructure and service position. The rapporteur calls on the Commission and the member states to come forward with strategies and solutions aiming at the development of an intermodal integrated transport system, incorporating the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.