

Multimodal transport: intermodal loading units, transferred containers or swap bodies

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The 2003 “Programme for the Promotion of Short Sea Shipping” sets out 14 actions. The Programme’s objectives are to improve the efficiency of short sea shipping and to promote its overall development. The Programme is divided into legislative, technical and operational actions. This mid-term review evaluates the progress achieved on these actions to date and analyses what would be the best way to move the process forward.

Short sea shipping has maintained its position as the only mode of transport capable of challenging the fast growth of road transport. Statistics bear this out. Between 1995 and 2004, the tonne-kilometre performance of short sea shipping in the EU-25 grew by 32%. Road performance grew by 35%. Short sea shipping performs 39% of all tonne-kilometres in the EU-25, compared to 44% for road. The corresponding shares for the EU-15 are 42% for short sea shipping and 44% for road. Available data indicates that the fastest growing segment of short sea shipping has continued to be containerised cargo with an average yearly growth of 8.8% since 2000. Nevertheless a number of obstacles remain to the development of short sea shipping. Short sea shipping is:

- Yet to reach an optimal level of integration in the multimodal door-to-door supply chain.
- Involves complex administrative procedures.
- Requires higher port efficiency and good hinterland accessibility.

The mid-term review finds that the Programme for the Promotion of Short Sea Shipping has shown its merits, strengthened the position of the mode in co-modality and is more than half-way complete. Moreover, the Programme’s Actions seem to have addressed the main problems facing short sea shipping as a whole.

For example, three action sheets, as presented in the 2003 Promotion Programme, are nearing completion. They are: IMO FAL, Motorways of the Sea and the Short-sea Customs Guide. New targets and with new deadlines have been set for the first two and the third one has been merged with other ongoing actions.

In certain cases there is a need to target the action more precisely than has previously been the case - such as improved integration of short sea shipping in the logistics supply chain. Further, new targets could be added such as extending the scope of the Short Sea Promotion Centres to cover inland supply chains. Separate efforts will also need to be made in the ports sector in order to make short sea shipping even more efficient and competitive in the logistics chain than it is today.

On a final point, the 14 actions introduced in the Promotion Programme seem to have been the right ones. Work on all of them therefore, whether ongoing, new or re-targeted, will continue.