

Press release

Brussels, 06 December, 2023



Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Gilkinet and rail CEOs exchange on upcoming Belgian EU Presidency priorities for transport

With the presentation of the Combined Transport Directive in early November, the EU's Greening Freight Transport Package is now complete and ready for discussion. The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER), the International Union of Railways (UIC), and European rail freight CEOs welcome the opportunity to consider in parallel the proposals for the Combined Transport Directive and the Road Vehicles Weights & Dimensions Directive in order to ensure coherence between the two initiatives and achieve truly interoperable rail freight. The topic was raised yesterday by rail freight CEOs at a high-level gathering with guest of honour Georges Gilkinet, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Mobility of Belgium, who confirmed the dossier will be among the priorities of the upcoming Belgian EU Presidency.

The rail sector welcomes the Commission's proposal on Combined Transport and views it as a crucial tool to offset the current shortcomings of the transport market which currently does not send the necessary price signals for customers to choose sustainable transport chains. Essential provisions are contained in the Commission's proposal to support this:

- a strict definition of combined transport chains eligible for regulatory support based on a **reduction of externalities of at least 40%**;
- **tax relief** for trucks used in combined transport;
- **lifting of driving bans** on combined transport road legs;
- requirements for authorities to **reduce the cost** of combined transport over a period of 7 years.

But the success of the Combined Transport Directive is directly linked to critical provisions that would need to be included in the Weights & Dimensions Directive

- in terms of **road-rail interoperability requirements** (including road units' size and shape, craneability of road vehicles; road units' resistance to rail air forces, retractability of protruding devices etc), and
- in terms of **better enforcement of road rules** based on existing or currently developed digital solutions (i.e. the use of **smart tachographs** to send air signals as to whether a road operation is part of a combined transport chain or not, **onboard weight sensors** connected to the tachographs in order to check whether the 4-ton allowance for combined transport is not misused in road-only transport).

The sector is in the process of reviewing the two Directives in parallel in order to establish further potential synergies between them.

Vice Prime Minister Georges GILKINET said: *“The Greening Transport Package will occupy Transport Ministers for quite some time. The Transport Council of 4 December took note of the progress report of the Spanish Presidency on the Weights & Dimensions Directive - a step forward which will facilitate further progress under Belgium’s tenure. Many Member States expressed the wish to look at both Combined Transport and Road Vehicles Weights & Dimensions in parallel. Belgium welcomes this approach and will support it throughout its Presidency during the 1st semester of 2024”.*

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *“We welcome the publication of the Combined Transport proposal, in particular the proposed reduction of external costs through combined transport. However, it is imperative that public measures to reduce the costs by at least 10% will be effectively implemented, and that the process to support combined transport is significantly simplified and streamlined. CER appreciates the Members States’ decision on 4 December to consider both the Combined Transport and Weights & Dimensions Directives in a synchronized, coherent, and coordinated manner. For the new directive to fulfill its promise, it is essential that rail and road are progressively made more interoperable. The sector looks forward to working with the Belgian Presidency to achieve a balanced and progressive legislative framework to support green freight transport”.*

UIC Freight Director Frédéric Hénon said: *“The success of the future revamped Combined Transport Directive will be linked to its ability to take advantage of what Digitalisation of Transport has to offer. In this respect, the rail sector is committed to the implementation of the Electronic Freight Transport Information (eFTI) Regulation which governs (B-to-A) exchange of regulatory information mandated by the Combined Transport Directive. Equally, UIC is committed to the development of rail and intermodal digital platforms for business-to-business applications”.*

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About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together around 70 railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 78% of the rail network length, 81% of the rail freight business and about 94% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policymakers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on Twitter [@CER_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cer).

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UIC is the worldwide organisation for the promotion of rail transport at a global level and collaborative development of the railway system. It brings together some 200 members on all 5 continents, among them rail operators, infrastructure managers, railway service providers, etc. UIC maintains close cooperation links with all actors in the rail transport domain around the world, including manufacturers, railway associations, public authorities and stakeholders in other domains and sectors whose experiences may be beneficial to rail development. UIC's main tasks include understanding the business needs of the rail community, developing innovation programmes to identify solutions to those needs, as well as preparing and publishing a series of documents such as reports, specifications, guidelines and IRS that facilitate the implementation of the innovative solutions. For more information, visit www.uic.org or follow us on X [@uic](https://twitter.com/uic) or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/uic)

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