

Council Faces Stalemate as Combined Transport Directive Loses Momentum

Despite ongoing negotiations on the revision of the Combined Transport Directive in the Council, the Hungarian Presidency has reached an impasse. Proposed compromises have not garnered sufficient support, leading to a lack of consensus on the definition of combined transport and a weakening of key elements in the initial proposal, particularly concerning targets to reduce the cost of Combined Transport (National Policy Frameworks) and the monitoring, compliance checks, and enforcement through the Electronic Freight Transport Information system (eFTI). The Community of European Railway & Infrastructure Companies (CER) urges Member States within the Council to maintain an ambitious outlook for Combined Transport. The significant energy and external cost savings that intermodal transport provides make it a vital means of ensuring a well-functioning and sustainable single market.

In the course of negotiations, the very **definition of Combined Transport** has been dividing opinion. CER believes decision-makers should build on the current definition of Combined Transport and avoid solutions that favour extensive road routes. Railways, the most energy-efficient mode of land transport, offer tailored solutions for various loading units across the EU. These tailored solutions must remain accessible to operators, allowing them to reach the nearest suitable rail terminal adapted to the specific loading unit they wish to transport, whether it be a container, a swap body, a semi-trailer, or an entire vehicle. Public support and financial resources need to be directed towards developing or improving rail, inland waterway, and short sea shipping networks and their common nodes.

Clear, time-bound cost reduction targets in the form of **National Policy Frameworks** are essential to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of combined transport operations, contributing to national energy efficiency and climate goals. This proactive approach can spare Member States the additional costs that will arise if such targets are not met. There is a need to move away from paper-based processes, which add no value to the monitoring of logistic chains and hinder communication with Competent Authorities, creating inefficiencies in compliance checks and enforcement. The Electronic Freight Transport Information (EFTI) system presents an opportunity that must be coordinated with the implementation of Combined Transport.

The Commission's proposal was presented as part of a package. Its ambition was, arguably, tailored to achieve a balance within that package. Nevertheless, Combined Transport provides an instrument that encourages support whereas on the flip side the **interrelated proposal on Weights and Dimensions**, sets in place immediate EU-wide incentives that enhance the competitiveness of road transport, under the misleading argument of improving energy efficiency and decarbonising the freight transport sector.

This imbalance between the two proposals is concerning. Any weakening of the proposal for Combined Transport, as appears to be happening in the Council

negotiations, or any solution that compromises meaningful progress compared to the current situation, further justifies a reassessment of the interrelated proposal. Otherwise, the EU's recent efforts to reduce the historic regulatory gap that hampers rail, and intermodal transport will be significantly undermined, **to the detriment of sustainable modes of transport such as rail, and at a cost to society as a whole.**

Facts to consider:

- Rail is 9 times more CO₂-efficient than road transport.
- Rail is 7 times more energy-efficient than road transport. This is of critical importance at a time when Europe is dependent on outside supply for 58% of its energy needs.
- One locomotive driver can replace up to 40 lorry drivers – a significant advantage considering the severe shortage of lorry drivers in Europe.
- Rail makes use of the low-carbon energy produced within the EU, and with an increasing contribution from renewables and other sources of low-emission electricity, providing zero emission mobility for passengers and freight already today.
- The European Rail Industry is a benchmark worldwide and strengthens the EU's competitiveness and strategic autonomy on technology.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"Strengthening the Single Market and promoting the EU's economic competitiveness requires action on transport logistic chains. Combined Transport supports the reduction of external costs and should reward intermodal operations that enhance energy efficiency and reduce fossil fuel dependency, a key advantage of railways in Europe. An ambitious outcome is necessary; otherwise, the EU risks regressing in its efforts to improve the efficiency and sustainability of transport, the largest emitter in the EU economy. Any weakening of this proposal will require an immediate reassessment of related legal acts under negotiation".*

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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).