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The standardised EUR pallet, created under the impetus of UIC, celebrates its half-century on the occasion of the Transport Logistic trade fair in Munich.

UIC continues to define the technical and quality standards governing this essential component of international logistics systems and distribution.

(Paris, 17 May 2011) The standardised European EUR pallet, a well-known and integral part of the international logistics and goods distribution system, celebrated its 50th anniversary on Wednesday 11 May during the Transport Logistic trade fair in Munich where it was the subject of a dedicated forum organised by Gütegemeinschaft Paletten e.V., Germany's national pallet manufacturing association.

It was in 1961 that the International Union of Railways (UIC) took the initiative to sign an agreement on the use of a 'standardised and exchangeable pallet' among railways, whose mutual use was organised and managed within the European Pallet Pool (EPP), and later transferred in the early 1970s by the railways to the European Pallet Association (EPA).

As UIC's Freight Director Oliver Sellnick highlighted at the forum, "50 years ago the railways looked for a way of making the carriage and storage of retail goods more efficient. Their solution was to design and construct a wooden block structure enabling retail goods to be kept together in loading units. This resulted in the birth of the "Europallet", the flat wooden four-way entry pallet marked with the initials "EUR" in an oval and the acronym of the registering railway having approved the manufacturing of the pallet in compliance with UIC rules. Today the pallet also bears the acronym "EPAL" in an oval (European Pallet Association), indicating that it meets the conditions set out by the pallet pool for the use of flat pallets and box pallets.

The specifications for the manufacturing and quality of wooden pallet plates are defined in UIC Leaflet 435. UIC is conscious of its responsibility, through these standards, for the quality of the pallets and the safety of the goods transported. In addition the wooden pallet has genuine environmental qualities compared to pallets made of synthetic materials, which give off CO₂ emissions when manufactured. UIC works in close cooperation with national pallet manufacturing associations and the European Pallet Association (EPAL).

With over 500 million units in circulation, the "EUR" flat pallet represents the world's largest pool of transport units. It plays a vital role in the handling of retail goods, from the production centre to the place of distribution; from the storage shelf in large warehouses to its loading into the back of a road vehicle for final distribution. The "EUR" pallet is handled with the help of any elevating trolley or fork lift.

As Oliver Sellnick underlined, "the "EUR" pallet has enabled goods to be handled more easily and quickly and to be better protected when transported, and has reduced the risk of losing

goods that come loose. For all these reasons, UIC is proud to have taken this initiative 50 years ago.” He added “today the railways and UIC are seeking to develop strategies that are even more heavily based on logistics concepts where rail can play a key role in the multimodal chain. With “Europallet”, we had already invented a loading method which became an essential tool in streamlining current logistics procedures (particularly procedures for stock and storage management).

Above and beyond this anniversary, UIC is strongly committed to pursuing standardisation work on pallets with an eye to the future, particularly with regard to optimising quality and possibilities for universal use. Work is focused on revising pallet quality criteria and introducing new types of “EUR” pallets (standardisation and quality assurance of a new revised type of half-pallet, folding wire mesh box-pallet and Asian pallet measuring 114 x 114 mm, etc.).

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