

**Press release**

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## Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Gilkinet and rail CEOs exchange views on the upcoming Belgian EU Presidency's priorities for transport

With the Combined Transport Directive being presented 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 the proposals for the Combined Transport Directive and the Road Vehicles Weights & Dimensions Directive in parallel 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 that the dossier will be among the upcoming Belgian EU Presidency's priorities.

The rail sector welcomes the Commission's proposal on combined transport and views it as a crucial tool to offset the transport market's current shortcomings, as it 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 the combined transport chains eligible for regulatory support based on an **externalities reduction 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

However, the success of the Combined Transport Directive is directly linked to critical provisions which would also need to be included in the Weights & Dimensions Directive, such as:

- **Road-rail interoperability requirements** (including the size and shape of road units, craneability of road vehicles; road unit resistance to rail air forces, retractability of protruding devices etc).
- **Better enforcement of road rules** based on existing or digital solutions under development (i.e. the use of **smart tachographs** to send air signals stating whether a road operation is part of a combined transport chain or not. **Onboard weight sensors** connected to the tachographs then check whether the 4-ton allowance for combined transport is not being misused in road-only transport).

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

**Deputy Prime Minister Georges GILKINET** said: *“The Greening Freight Transport Package will occupy transport ministers for quite some time. The Transport Council of 4 December took note of the Spanish Presidency’s progress report 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 the Combined Transport and Road Vehicles Weights & Dimensions in parallel. Belgium welcomes this approach and will support it throughout its Presidency in the first half of 2024.”*

**CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola** stated: *“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 costs by at least 10% will be effectively implemented, and that the process to support combined transport is considerably simplified and streamlined. CER appreciates the Members States’ decision on 4 December to consider both the Combined Transport and Weights & Dimensions Directives in a synchronised, coherent, and coordinated manner. For the new directive to fulfil 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** added: *“The future success of the revamped Combined Transport Directive will be linked to its ability to take advantage of what transport digitalisation has to offer. In this respect, the rail sector is committed to implementing the Electronic Freight Transport Information (eFTI) Regulation which governs the (B-to-A) exchange of regulatory information mandated by the Combined Transport Directive. At the same time, 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. It’s members are long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 73% of the rail network length, 76% of the rail freight business and about 92% 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](http://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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#### About UIC

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