COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 18.10.2007
COM(2007) 607 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

Freight Transport Logistics Action Plan

{SEC(2007) 1320}
{SEC(2007) 1321}

EN   EN

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

Freight Transport Logistics Action Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

The mid-term review of the 2001 White Paper[1] stresses the key role of logistics in ensuring sustainable and competitive mobility in Europe and contributing to meeting other objectives, such as a cleaner environment, security of energy supply, transport safety and security.

Freight Transport Logistics focuses on the planning, organisation, management, control and execution of freight transport operations in the supply chain. It is one of the drivers of European competitiveness and thus a prime contributor to the renewed Lisbon agenda on growth and jobs. Production and distribution networks depend on high-quality, efficient logistics chains to organise the transport of raw materials and finished goods across the EU and beyond. It is primarily a business-related activity and a task for industry. Nevertheless, the authorities have a clear role to play in creating the appropriate framework conditions.

Estimates put the share of the logistics industry in Europe at close to 14% of GDP. Over the recent years, the logistics industry has had growth rates above the average of European economies. For example, intra- and extra-EU trade has risen by 55% in value since 1999. This growth has come about through European integration, liberalisation and the relatively low cost of freight transport which has led to changes in production and trade patterns, inside the EU and globally. One consequence of growth is that the surge in containerised trade and liner shipping is leading to high congestion in certain seaports and port-hinterland connections.

Europe counts several logistics companies that are global leaders. A well-functioning European framework for logistics can constitute a platform on which to discuss logistics-related issues with other trade partners.

Logistics policy needs to be pursued at all levels of governance. There is a growing need for a coherent EU approach to logistics considerations that offers an opportunity for reinforced co-operation and co-ordination between the different dimensions of transport policy and must become an underlying factor in decision-making.

The present Freight Logistics Action Plan is one of a series of policy initiatives jointly launched by the European Commission to improve the efficiency and sustainability of freight transport in Europe.[2] It presents a number of short- to medium-term actions that will help Europe address its current and future challenges and ensure a competitive and sustainable freight transport system in Europe. The

---

[1]   COM(2006) 314.
[2]   The EU's freight transport agenda,COM(2007)xxxx

external dimension of all of these actions will need to be considered with a view to efficiently integrating third countries and in particular neighbouring countries into the logistic chain

1.1. The process so far

The European Commission issued a Communication on Freight Transport Logistics in Europe[3] in June 2006.

The Communication and the proposed areas of action in it were supported by the Transport Council in December 2006[4]. The European Parliament gave a positive opinion in September 2007[5]. The European Economic and Social Committee broadly welcomed the approach adopted by the Commission.[6]

The topics put forward in this Action Plan are based on extensive consultations with stakeholders.

2. ACTIONS

2.1. e-Freight and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)

Advanced information and communication technologies (ICT) can greatly contribute towards co-modality by improving infrastructure, traffic and fleet management, facilitating a better tracking and tracing of goods across the transport networks and better connecting businesses and administrations. However, a number of obstacles to a more wide-spread and seamless use of ICT in freight logistics need to be overcome, including the insufficient standardisation of the respective information exchanges and market actors' disparate capabilities to use ICT. Legal requirements may also hamper the use of ICT. In addition, data security and privacy issues must be taken into account.

The concept of e-Freight denotes the vision of a paper-free, electronic flow of information associating the physical flow of goods with a paperless trail built by ICT. It includes the ability to track and trace freight along its journey across transport modes and to automate the exchange of content-related data for regulatory or commercial purposes. This will be made more practical and affordable by emerging technologies such as radio frequency identification (RFID)[7] and the use of the Galileo satellite positioning system. Freight should be identifiable and locatable regardless of the mode it is transported on. A necessary condition for this is that standard interfaces within the various transport modes are put in place and their interoperability across modes is assured.

The e-Freight concept could lead, in the future, to an **"Internet for cargo"** where information would be made available on-line in a secure way, as is the case today

---

[3]   COM(2006)336.
[4]   12 December 2006.
[5]   P6_TA(2007)0375..
[6]   TEN/262.
[7]   COM(2007) 96 final.

with the "Internet for people". One characteristic of this is the capability to view and compare online information on the services provided by freight transport operators. Another concerns administrative simplification. Experience shows that information systems for administrative data can also be used for business-to-business communications.

The implementation of a system for the maritime exchange of information from ship to shore, shore to ship and between all stakeholders, using services such as SafeSeaNet, LRIT (Long-range Identification and Tracking) and AIS (Automatic Identification System), will facilitate safer and more expedient navigation and logistics operations, thereby improving maritime transport's integration with other transport modes ("e-maritime").

The roll-out of systems such as RIS (River Information Services), ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System), TAF (Telematic Applications for rail Freight) and VTMIS (Vessel Traffic Management and Information Systems) bears witness to the progress made in other transport modes. In road transport, however, the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) in helping to better manage infrastructure and transport operations is slow. A cohesive deployment strategy for ITS, incorporating the specific requirements of road haulage, such as for navigation systems, digital tachographs and tolling systems, could contribute significantly to material change in the logistics chain.

The Commission is therefore preparing a major initiative on ITS for 2008, which will establish a detailed roadmap for ITS development and deployment in Europe, thereby also addressing the main technology applications relevant for freight logistics.

<div align="center">e-Freight</div>

Together with stakeholders, develop a roadmap for the implementation of e-freight, expanding on the concept of the "Internet for cargo" and identifying the problem areas where EU action such as standardisation is required.

Deadline: Identification of action areas by 2009.

Work towards a standard for information flows to ensure the integration and interoperability of modes at data level and provide an open, robust data architecture primarily for business-to-administration and administration-to-administration data flows.

Deadline: 2010.

Mandate work on a standard data set to describe freight, including for regulatory requirements (while taking into account the current requirements for hazardous goods, live animals, etc.) and technologies such as RFID.

Deadline: 2009.

Make a proposal on "e-maritime".

Deadline: 2009.

> In the context of the ITS action plan:
>
> **Establish a framework for the development of ITS applications addressing also freight transport logistics, including monitoring dangerous goods and live animals transport, tracking and tracing, and digital maps.**
>
> Deadline: 2009.
>
> **Establish a regulatory framework for the standardisation of functional specifications for a single interface (on-board unit) for the provision and exchange of business-to-administration and business-to-business information.**
>
> Deadline: 2010.
>
> **Accelerate work towards interoperability in Electronic Fee Collection[8], and incorporate the necessary components into the single interface.**
>
> Deadline: 2008.

2.2. Sustainable quality and efficiency

2.2.1. Continuous bottleneck exercise

In 2006 stakeholders were called upon to identify operational, infrastructure-related and administrative bottlenecks, resulting in close to 500 items. This inventory gives, for the first time, an overall picture of specific obstacles that hinder freight transport logistics in Europe. Industry and public authority representatives have volunteered to act as focal points for actors from the logistics industry and to help analyse and propose solutions to the reported bottlenecks

> **Continue the freight transport logistics bottleneck exercise and accelerate the work to find practical solutions to bottlenecks, wherever possible, while considering legal action where needed.**
>
> Deadline: Continuous. First results by 2008.

2.2.2. Freight transport logistics personnel and training

In many areas of freight transport logistics there are shortages of skilled personnel. Therefore, the EU will examine measures in close cooperation with social partners to enhance the attractiveness of logistics professions and to encourage mobility of staff across borders. Within this context, Cohesion Policy instruments (the European Social and Regional Development Funds) could alleviate these shortages by targeting interventions towards training (actions and infrastructure).

Today, training provided by universities and other institutions varies greatly in Europe. Efforts are required to focus and enhance the qualifications of logistics personnel, notably by strengthening competence in transport, and to support lifelong learning. A voluntary European certificate for freight transport logisticians would

---

[8] Directive 2004/52/EC.

contribute positively to the consistency and quality of training in Europe. It could furthermore target all skills levels, where needed differentiate between sector-specific requirements or constitute a basic certificate for additional sector-specific training by industry itself. Mutually recognisable certification for freight transport logistics and related areas (e.g. warehousing) can facilitate mobility. Due account should be taken of existing training standards.

> **The Commission will work with the European social partners and other relevant stakeholders to draw up a list of minimum qualifications and training requirements at different levels of specialisation to be incorporated into a framework that can ensure the mutual recognition of training certificates.**
>
> Deadline: 2009.
>
> **The Commission to launch a dialogue with the European social partners to find ways to improve the attractiveness of transport logistics professions, and highlight opportunities for targeting EU Cohesion Policy interventions towards logistics training.**
>
> Deadline: start 2008, continuous thereafter.

2.2.3. *Improving performance*

Performance indicators for freight transport logistics chains are useful instruments for encouraging service quality. They can also be used to measure environmental and social impacts. Indicators already exist for combined transport on rail, for air transport and for short-sea shipping. However, no common system of performance indicators so far exists across modes or for freight transport logistics.

> **Establish, in consultation with the stakeholders, a core set of generic indicators that would best serve the purpose of measuring and recording performance (e.g. sustainability, efficiency etc.) in freight transport logistics chains** to encourage a switch to more efficient and cleaner forms of transport and generally improve logistics performance[9]**. The Commission will then consider incorporating them into a code of best practice or recommendation.**
>
> Deadline: By end of 2009.

2.2.4. *Benchmarking intermodal terminals*

The efficiency of intermodal terminals, including ports and airports, is crucial for logistics performance. They merit a separate effort in benchmarking, taking inspiration from the initiative to promote performance indicators above. A set of generic European benchmarks (both static and dynamic) should be developed allowing further specification at local level. The benchmarks should be established in tight co-operation with industry and should be given appropriate dissemination.

---

[9]   Decision 1600/2002/EC.

Owing to different characteristics, considerable differentiation should be considered between land terminals, seaports, airports and inland waterway ports.

> **Elaborate, together with industry, a set of generic (dynamic and static) benchmarks for terminals, starting from multimodal inland terminals, and incorporate them into a code of best practice or recommendation and disseminate information about them.**
>
> Deadline: 2010.

2.2.5. *Promotion of best practice*

Multimodal freight transport is still relatively underutilised. This may be due to lack of knowledge of the benefits of modal alternatives, integration between transport modes or the additional costs of transhipment. These problems can be addressed by a broad initiative to share good practices and provide practical assistance using networks of logistics institutes and extending the scope of Shortsea Promotion Centres into inland transport logistics.

> **Extend the role of the Shortsea Promotion Centres and their European network to inland transport logistics.**
>
> Deadline: Continuous.
>
> **Establish a network between logistics institutes and promote industry initiatives to exchange experience and disseminate best practice.**
>
> Deadline: 2010.

2.2.6. *Statistical data*

A considerable amount of statistical information is available. However, it does not produce a reliable picture of Europe's logistics market. Relevant indicators and means of measurement need to be developed to assess the situation and its evolution over time. At the same time, the administrative burden on the Member States or businesses should be kept to a minimum.

> **The Commission together with the stakeholders will review the availability of and determine the requirements for data on freight transport logistics across modes and assess improvements to the collection of statistical information.**
>
> Deadline: 2009.

2.3. Simplification of transport chains

2.3.1. *Simplification of administrative compliance*

The logistics industry needs to comply with regulatory requirements stemming from administrative considerations.

The simplification and decentralisation of exchanges of freight-related information can substantially reduce the cost of regulatory requirements, especially when using

information and communication technologies. Already the legislation governing customs clearance allows among others for non-Community goods to be released for circulation at the port or to be placed under a transit regime for clearance in a customs office at destination.

Work should build on the initiatives taken following the Commission's proposal for a Decision on the paperless environment for customs and trade[10]. This contains a framework for the information provided by economic operators to be given only once ('single window') and for the goods to be controlled by those authorities at the same time and at the same place ('one stop administrative shop').

The Commission will work on a "European Maritime Transport Space without Barriers" where both the ship's journey and goods could be reliably and securely tracked, thereby decreasing the need for individual controls in transport operations between Community ports. This would contribute to short sea shipping being able to fully benefit from the internal market.

> **Establish a single window (single access point) and one stop-administrative shopping for administrative procedures in all modes.**
>
> Deadline: Operational by 2012.
>
> **Make a legislative proposal on simplifying and facilitating short sea shipping towards a maritime transport space without barriers.**
>
> Deadline: 2008

2.3.2.   *Single transport document*

A transport document is required today to follow the carriage of goods[11]. Such transport documents are normally specific to the different transport modes. Multimodal transport documents exist, but they are not sufficiently widely used in electronic format. The Commission will, therefore, work towards establishing a single European transport document that can be used in all transport modes, thereby facilitating multimodal freight transport and enhancing the framework offered by multimodal waybills or multimodal manifests. It will look at the possibilities of making this document optional and providing it in an electronic format.

> **In consultation with interested parties, the Commission will examine the details and added value of establishing a single transport document for all carriage of goods, irrespective of mode. The Commission will then consider making an appropriate legislative proposal.**
>
> Deadline: 2009.

---

[10]   COM(2005)609.
[11]   Regulation 11/60 and Directive 92/106/EC.

2.3.3. *Liability*

Multi-modal transport suffers from friction costs induced by the absence of a uniform, cross-modal liability regime. Work towards creating a multimodal regulatory structure for liability is taking place at global level (UNCITRAL), but failing rapid progress the Commission will start exploring other options for Europe:

(1)   A legal act could be envisaged with a standard liability clause for all transport operations. It could be a fall-back clause, meaning that if nothing else is agreed between parties to a transport contract, this standard clause would automatically apply. The contracting parties could also explicitly mention it in the transport contract.

(2)   Gaps between existing international liability regimes could be addressed in such a way that coverage is provided for those parts of the logistics chain that currently fall between the mode-based liability regimes.

Assess the need for introduction within the EU of a standard (fall-back) liability clause.

Deadline: Consultations by 2008, possible proposal in 2009.

Assess the need for a legal instrument to allow full coverage of the existing international, mode-based liability regimes over the entire multimodal logistics chain.

Deadline: Consultations by 2009, possible proposal in 2010.

2.3.4. *Security*

Security relates to the protection against and prevention from crime, banditry and unlawful intentional acts such as terrorism. Increasingly, security has become an intrinsic part of logistic quality and competitive performance. As far as the supply chain security for external trade is concerned, the Customs Code[12] was revised and the concept of Authorised Economic Operator was introduced, also laying down minimum requirements for safety and security from 2008 onwards.

A balance has to be drawn between security procedures fulfilling the highest requirements and the free flow of trade. For instance, the overall added value an defects of full, 100% container screening on trade flows would have to be carefully considered before making decisions. Smart technologies can be used to avoid delays. Standardisation and best practice can be used to minimise the effects of security requirement on trade flows.

The review of legislation on maritime and port security will provide an opportunity to assess port access requirements and to examine the development of a European model for multi purpose access cards.

---

[12]   Regulation (EC) 648/2005.

> **Start developing European standards, in line with existing legislation, international conventions and international standards, in order to facilitate the secure integration of transport modes in the logistic chain.**
>
> Deadline: 2008
>
> **In the context of the work on guidelines and minimum standards for maritime and port security matters, simplify port access requirements.**
>
> Deadline: 2008.

2.4. **Vehicle dimensions and loading standards**

Although European legislation[13] sets global limitations for vehicle dimensions and weights in international road traffic and for dimensions in national traffic, it leaves a certain margin of manoeuvre for the Member States. This creates inconsistency for operators and makes enforcement more difficult. At the same time, technological developments and changed transport requirements have called into question the current standards. While there might, therefore, be an opportunity to review the current European legislation, it is necessary to consider the effects that any modification to the current limits might have on road safety, energy efficiency, CO_2 emissions, noxious emissions, road infrastructure and intermodal transport operations, including combined transport. The possible need for stricter criteria for the vehicles, their equipment and drivers, and restrictions concerning route choice should also be assessed.

In order to facilitate transhipment between modes and reflect technological developments, the proposal for a directive on Intermodal Loading Units[14] should be amended, to increase the competitiveness of intermodal freight transport. The proposal aims at decreasing friction costs in handling operations between modes by standardising certain handling characteristics of intermodal loading units and at improving transport safety by introducing a periodic inspection of all units. A mandate establishing new standards for loading units that can be used across transport modes shall be given separately to the EU standardisation bodies.

> **Study the options for a modification of the standards for vehicle weights and dimensions and consider the added value of updating Directive 96/53/EC.**
>
> Deadline: 2008.
>
> **Update the 2003 proposal on Intermodal Loading Units to technical progress.**
>
> Deadline: 2007.
>
> **Establish a mandate for standardising an optimal European Intermodal Loading Unit that can be used in all surface modes.**
>
> Deadline: 2007.

---

[13]   Directive 96/53/EC.
[14]   COM(2003)155 final.

| Examine the compatibility of loading units used in air transport and other modes, and, if appropriate, make proposals.

Deadline: 2010. |
| :--- |

2.5. **"Green" transport corridors for freight**

The concept of transport corridors is marked by a concentration of freight traffic between major hubs and by relatively long distances of transport. Along these corridors industry will be encouraged to rely on co-modality and on advanced technology in order to accommodate rising traffic volumes while promoting environmental sustainability and energy efficiency. Green transport corridors will reflect an integrated transport concept where short sea shipping, rail, inland waterways and road complement each other to enable the choice of environmentally friendly transport. They will be equipped with adequate transhipment facilities at strategic locations (such as seaports, inland ports, marshalling yards and other relevant logistics terminals and installations) and with supply points initially for biofuels and, later, for other forms of green propulsion. Green corridors could be used to experiment with environmentally-friendly, innovative transport units, and with advanced ITS applications. A number of initiatives are coming together to promote this objective, including the freight-oriented railway network, motorways of the sea and NAIADES. Account should be taken of the opportunities offered by the TEN-T guidelines on the development and the integration of multimodal transport chains.

Fair and non-discriminatory access to corridors and transhipment facilities is a requirement for co-modality and needs to be addressed. Restrictions of access to the market for terminal operations, *inter alia*, in ports and marshalling yards, can have repercussions to the customers of these facilities. Open and non-discriminatory access for operators and customers of these facilities should be ensured in accordance with the rules of the Treaty.

| **Define green transport corridors and organise cooperation between authorities and freight transport logistics operators in order to identify improvements to ensure adequate infrastructure for sustainable transport.**

Deadline: 2008.

Reinforce green corridors in the TEN-T and in the Marco Polo priorities.

Deadline: 2010

Develop a freight-oriented rail network.

Deadline: Proposal by 2008. Corridor structure by 2012.

Promote the establishment and recognition of Motorways of the Sea through, among others, a better co-ordination of different funding sources.

Deadline: 2008.

Implement the NAIADES programme for inland waterway transport.

Deadline: Full implementation by 2013. |
| :--- |

2.6. Urban freight transport logistics

Freight transport logistics has an essential urban dimension. Distribution in urban conurbations requires efficient interfaces between trunk deliveries over longer distances and distribution to the final destination over shorter distances. In addition, the distribution process between production centres and customers inside an urban area needs to be efficient and clean.

A holistic vision should cover freight transport and pay attention to aspects of land use planning, environmental considerations and traffic management, alongside a number of other factors. Facilitating freight and passenger transport demand management should be an integral part of town planning and offers opportunities for the deployment of innovative ICT-based solutions.

> **The Commission will encourage the exchange of experiences of representatives of urban areas to help establish a set of recommendations, best practice, indicators or standards for urban transport logistics, including freight deliveries and delivery vehicles.**
>
> Deadline: Urban Transport Action Plan in 2008.
>
> **Make recommendations of commonly agreed benchmarks or performance indicators to measure efficiency and sustainability of delivery and terminals and, more generally, in urban transport logistics and planning.**
>
> Deadline: 2011.
>
> **Reinforce the freight part of CIVITAS towards better co-ordination, or integration, between passenger and freight transport, between interurban (long-distance) and urban transport logistics. This can lead to an integrated "CIVITAS Freight".**
>
> Deadline: 2010.

3. LOOKING AHEAD

The actions outlined above are designed to help the freight transport logistics industry towards long-term efficiency and growth by addressing issues such as congestion, pollution and noise, CO_2 emissions and dependence on fossil fuels that – if left unchecked – would put at risk its efficiency. These actions need to be accompanied by work on a long-term perspective, undertaken jointly with the Member States, in order to establish a common basis for investment in tomorrow's freight transport systems.

The European Commission will report on progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan in 2010. This report will also provide the opportunity to determine what further actions will be required in the areas outlined above and to evolve EU freight transport logistics policy in line with the economic context and technological developments.