



2011 White Paper – The turning point for intermodality?

The European Intermodal Association (EIA), an NGO representing a broad spectrum of industrial port hinterland stakeholders, welcomes the new *“White Paper; Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system” (COM(2011)144 final)*.

This document, which has been produced by the European Commission, includes a Vision (how to safeguard the EU's competitive position), a Strategy (what needs to be done), the Means (integration of modal networks, new innovation, funding) and concludes with the External Dimension (EU across borders). The previous Transport White Paper of 2001 has, therefore, been updated in a timely move to provide a clear formulation of the way in which Europe's transport industries should position themselves on a growing sustainable, global, competitive marketplace.

The aim behind the proposals set out in the new WP is to make substantial inroads into Europe's dependence on imported oil and drive carbon emissions from transport down by 60% by 2050. The document includes a roadmap of 40 concrete initiatives to build a competitive transport system.

EIA Round Table

The new WP was of the subject of discussions at a high level Round Table before the EIA General Assembly in Strasbourg on April 5. Special guest was the Chairman of the EU Parliament Transport Committee Brian SIMPSON together with other Members of the EU Parliament. The discussion was chaired by the President of EIA, Hanja MAIJ WEGGEN (former Minister of Transport of the Netherlands; former MEP).

Response to the content of the WP will depend on value judgements and on the attitude to intermodality of the end user, be it an authority, transport or manufacturing industry or any kind of potential investor searching for clear guidelines on what to expect between now and 2050.

The word ‘multimodal’ is used 24 times in this 30-page document, which is a first positive sign. Often it is mentioned in relation to the need for further development of core infrastructure networks, freight corridors, logistics chains, terminal networks and also e-freight solutions. Intermodal, mentioned half a dozen times, is often used to underline the need for better integration of services, sustainable low carbon and energy consumption and liability regimes. The politically correct ‘comodality’ (use of different modes on their own and in combination with the aim of obtaining optimal and sustainable use of resources) is strangely enough mentioned once only.

Definitions as such do not really matter: the bottom line is that intermodality is regarded as a serious option in relation to the various challenges highlighted in the WP. The EIA, together with its members, partners and the press have done a good job in regularly calling attention to intermodality

at the highest political level in various consultative meetings, individual lobbying, EU project involvement, public events, using a multitude of promotional tools.

The White Paper – key statements

Now to some of the strong statements made in the WP: "curbing of mobility is no option; EU transport still depends on oil and oil products for 96% of its energy needs; no change in transport is possible without adequate networks and more intelligence; 30% of road freight over 300 km should shift to other modes such as rail or waterway, more than 50% by 2050" (appropriate infrastructure is required). All these are rather courageous statements to come from Brussels. The road sector is increasingly considering intermodal options: in 2010, the ERF - EU Road Federation (network construction) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with EIA. The road operators as good as are bound to follow suit.

Key facts stated in WP include the following: "congestion costs will increase by 50% by 2050; the cost of infrastructure development to match demand for 2010-2030 is € 1.5 trillion; completion of the TEN-T network requires €550 billion until 2020 out of which €215 billion can be solved by removing major bottlenecks; considerable investment will be needed to expand or capacity on rail networks".

On this last point, the EIA believes that, generally speaking, the shift towards rail could be achieved more rapidly. Intermodal procedures are already in place to this end, provided they are properly streamlined among all partners along the chain. Investigations conducted by the UIRR and the DIOMIS reports have shown quite clearly where investment is required.

The Chairman of the EU Parliament Transport Committee expressed his first thoughts regarding the WP at the above-mentioned EIA Round Table. It would seem that some Member States expected more cross-border actions, greater emphasis on inland waterway transport and a stage-by-stage plan for achieving the various goals. For Klaus Ebeling (EIA office), although the time span up to 2050 corresponds to that of the Climate Agenda (traffic and climate being closely inter-related), the WP makes no allowance for intermediate staging points of, for example, 10 years.

Specific timelines

Admittedly some goals with specific timelines are given in the WP: "by 2050, complete a EU high-speed rail network; triple the length of existing high-speed network by 2030; a fully functional EU wide multimodal TEN-T 'core network' by 2030, with a high quality and capacity network by 2050; at least 40% cut in shipping emissions; move towards full application of *user pays* and *polluter pays* principles'; 40% use of sustainable low carbon fuels in aviation".

Where these last points are concerned, EIA believes indeed that these principles should be enforced without special allowance for any of the modes. It is completely scandalous that people should be able to fly from Frankfurt to Trieste/Volos/Pula for only €8! Road tolls should be levied not only on major highways but also on national B roads. It should not be our intention to make transport more expensive but to strike a fair balance between modes based on the *real costs* of transport in order to motivate clients to use alternative or combined modes.

The role of seaports

"Seaports have a major role as logistics centres and require efficient hinterland connections" is a further statement from the WP. At the EIA meeting in Strasbourg, the Port of Hamburg authorities stressed the urgency for greater harmonisation in port hinterland procedures, which was confirmed by another EIA member, Polzug Intermodal, offering services between EU ports to the West of the continent via Poland, Baltic and the CIS towards the Caucasus. The EIA decided in Strasbourg to launch an ad hoc port hinterland Working Group to address such harmonisation issues.

"The European Maritime Transport Space without Barriers should be further developed into a 'Blue Belt' of free maritime movement in and around Europe. By 2050, all core seaports should be sufficiently connected to the rail freight and, where possible, inland waterway systems. The Motorways of the Sea will be the maritime dimension of the core network".

A number of EIA members operating short sea shipping services could not be more in agreement with this last point. The EIA secretariat stresses the urgent need to pay more attention to promoting a modern image and better integration within this sector's logistics chain. A best practice example is the Roder UN Group, which successfully completed such integration years ago (Istanbul-Trieste/Marseilles), whereas Samskip has successfully integrated short sea shipping towards the Baltic states, Russia and Central Asia by short sea, road, rail and barge.

A core air network

"A core airport network should be connected to the rail network, preferably high-speed", according to the WP. In this context, the EIA recently hosted an Air Research group chaired by Airbus, the members of which are Eurocontrol, various EU airports, etc. Apparently the air sector searched and found EIA, since it needed intermodal input for its new 'Integration of Transport modes' working group, in an attempt to share more freight capacity with high-speed rail and road.

"The core network must ensure efficient multi-modal links between the EU capitals and other main cities, ports, airports and key land border crossings, as well as other main economic centres. It should focus on the completion of missing links – mainly cross-border sections and bottlenecks/bypasses" according to the WP.

Obviously EIA is pleased with this specific strategic goal. At the Strasbourg meeting with the Chairman of EU Parliament's Transport Committee, Peter Wolters (EIA office) stressed an important precondition for this goal, namely relevant statistics and overviews. These should visualise all the different networks, economic centres, bottlenecks, etc. The EC should push Member States and Customs to give more relevant intermodal (source-destination, etc) data as input for the intermodal task force within EUROSTAT, of which EIA is an official member. The first EIA 'Intermodal Yearbook 2010, strategies, statistics, terminals and players' (atlas) is already an attempt to give greater visibility to current port hinterland networks in this respect.

Need for new transport patterns

"New transport patterns must emerge, according to which larger volumes of freight and greater numbers of travellers are carried jointly to their destination by the most efficient (combination of) modes". The EIA is pleased that the notion of *consolidation* of freight volumes, inherent to successful intermodalism, is now understood by a growing number of industries. Currently, EIA and its partners

are working on future collaborative partnership concepts. This means that freight and customers will be 'matched' with partners and/or competitors with the same destinations, sharing capacity, vehicles etc. "Competition on the supermarket shelf, not among modes" is the new slogan.

"Put in practice the concepts of 'single window' and one-stop administrative shop and creating the appropriate framework for the deployment of tracking and tracing technologies". At this point, EIA is proud to announce that, after almost three years of work within the EU-funded Smart CM initiative, a platform has been built to provide the 'single window' approach, offering security and efficiency to global door-to-door intermodal container transport chain management.

The 3rd phase demonstration expected to finish in May took place on two global corridors: EU and Asia Pacific and between EU and the Middle East. During this phase, the project cooperated with the port of Ningbo, China Customs and also the Singapore and the Thailand Customs in order to test the Green Lane concept using the SMART-CM platform. The neutral platform has successfully achieved efficient communication with different Container Security Devices (CSDs), thus fulfilling the interoperability requirement.

Long-term targets and short-term needs

It is important not to lose sight of the long time frame of the WP. Some goals may sound very ambitious, like "50% of longer-distance road freight transport diverted to rail and other sustainable modes" and "87 percent growth for rail freight" or "60% GHG reduction". However, we must not be misled: these goals are supposed to be attained in almost 50 years, which in itself begs a number of questions. It could be argued as regards major intermodal rail freight growth that business as usual growth *alone* could deliver this result, even without EU guidance. Furthermore, if 50% of long-distance road traffic were to be shifted, almost twice as much rail and/or waterborne growth would be needed.

If *current* EU regulations were properly implemented and deployed (Railway packages; NAIADES for inland waterways; Traffic Management Systems for all modes), along with the internalisation of the external costs principle for all modes, Europe would already be well on its way to safeguarding its position as a competitive and sustainable logistics superpower.

Formulating a clear industrial port hinterland strategy is the task of the market. New technologies, optimising performances of multimodal logistics chains and creating seamless door-to-door transport, be it via single wagons, electric vehicles or innovative eco-port concepts, the market will undoubtedly find the answer in today's competitive environment.

The next steps include preparation by the EC of appropriate legislative proposals in the coming decade together with specific initiatives. However, before doing so, the European Parliament and the Council will be examining this WP in the coming weeks and the Transport Ministers are to have intensive discussions in June.

