

Promoting combined transport – Council agrees its negotiating stance

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The EU is promoting combined transport as a way to transfer some long-distance freight from lorries to greener means of transport such as barges, ships and trains. The Council today agreed on its position (general approach) on a proposal which clarifies the current rules for combined transport and makes it more competitive compared to road-only freight transport.

This reform creates better conditions for combined transport so that it can compete more easily with pure road freight. It is good for everyone since it will result in improved air quality and less road congestion.

Norbert Hofer, Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology of Austria, President of the Council

The draft directive revises the 1992 combined transport directive, which is the only legal instrument at EU level which provides for direct incentives to encourage a modal shift in goods transport.

Under the Council's general approach, the new rules will apply to international combined transport operations, namely those carried out between EU countries, or between an EU country and a non-EU country. This essentially maintains the scope of the current directive, but the inclusion, under certain conditions, of operations that are partly carried out in third countries is clarified.

The reform will provide extra flexibility on the length of the road leg, so as to allow the nearest suitable transshipment terminal to be reached. It will also clarify the evidence requirements for combined transport operations and extend economic support measures, in particular regarding investment in transshipment terminals.

The Council position allows member states to decide on certain limitations relating to cabotage, including a maximum 5-day time limitation for the continuous presence of vehicles on their territory, in order to avoid misuse of cabotage through the provision of unlimited services.

The Commission presented its proposal in November 2017 as part of the second mobility package.

Today's agreement opens the way for negotiations to begin with the European Parliament.

The full text of the Council's position ('general approach') will be made available on this webpage.

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