

LOGISTICS CONFERENCE, 8 MAY 2007

ANNOTATED AGENDA FOR THE ACTION PLAN DISCUSSIONS

This document is meant to provide a structure for the discussions on the Logistics Action Plan during the conference of 8 May 2007 (in particular its afternoon session). These discussions will concentrate on a select number of topics. Each of these topics is briefly described in the document, and indications are given as to what actions could be considered.

Note: Neither the selection of topics contained in this document nor the assessment of challenges therein or possible solutions to these should be perceived as representing the official position of the European Commission. The Commission may decide to reformulate or withdraw some of these proposals or add others, in particular in order to take into account the results of the impact assessment as well as the discussions at the conference.

1. E-FREIGHT AND INTELLIGENT TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

The use of interoperable information and communication technologies (ICT) and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) in the transport logistics chain should be encouraged further as a matter of priority. The emergence of new technological solutions, such as radio-frequency identification (RFID), the Galileo satellite navigation system, River Information Services, European Rail Traffic Management System and e-maritime are creating major new opportunities that could constitute components of an integrated approach towards intelligent logistics.

Such an approach is circumscribed by the concept of "e-freight", which denotes the vision of a paper-free, electronic exchange of freight transport-related documentation. e-Freight will play a major role in simplifying administrative compliance. Its implementation is helped by the emergence of an "Internet for cargo" where freight is able to communicate via a common infrastructure, much as people do today over the "Internet for people".

Possible initiatives to accelerate the application of ITS/ICT to freight logistics could encourage the emergence of an open architecture that is based on interoperable components and supported by common messaging. This would require standardisation efforts towards a single platform for applications, data and interconnectivity. A first priority might be the information exchanges between administrations and private parties and between administrations themselves. Furthermore, the example of River Information Services shows how an originally administrative information system can also be used for business-to-business communications.

2. QUALITY

Quality in logistics services has many dimensions, including the speed, timeliness and reliability of delivery, respectfulness of environmental and social concerns or the protection of freight against wilful or accidental damage or loss.

The ongoing exercise to identify and solve bottlenecks to freight logistics will have a positive effect on quality.

Measurable indicators can be used to characterise services or logistics chains or transshipment facilities. However, even though some indicators exist for air transport and short sea shipping, no common system of performance indicators is available across modes or for freight logistics. Initiatives to identify such indicators could therefore be encouraged through a European approach in tight consultation with the stakeholders. Similarly, encouraging the uptake of best practices that enhance service quality could also usefully be addressed at EU level.

Statistical indicators will also need to be elaborated to measure European logistics performance.

3. SIMPLIFICATION OF TRANSPORT CHAINS

A single transport document is an option to be considered. It could be used in all transport operations and modes, thereby facilitating multimodal freight transport and enhancing the framework offered by existing multimodal waybills or multimodal manifests.

While following closely the work towards creating a multimodal regulatory structure for liability at global level (ongoing in UNCITRAL), other options could be considered for Europe, such as an optional standard liability clause or filling in the gaps between existing international, mode-based liability regimes.

Security should not cause undue disruptions to logistics. Actions could contain a set of European standards towards a toolkit facilitating and simplifying secure interconnectivity. These standards would have to be in line with international conventions and standards.

4. VEHICLE DIMENSIONS AND LOADING STANDARDS

Legislation on vehicle weights and dimensions was adopted in 1996 (Directive 96/53/EC). The Commission services are examining the option of adapting this Directive to technological developments and changed transport requirements, in particular as regards allowing the maximum weight of 44 tonnes for the carriage of all containers and swap bodies on the road in combined transport operations.

Furthermore, to absorb the foreseen growth of freight transport in Europe over the next years, the added value could be studied of allowing the cross-border movements of vehicle combinations that are longer than is currently the case while respecting the individual modules prescribed in the Directive. For this, infrastructure constraints, safety, environmental and social conditions, potential route and weight restrictions, additional vehicle, equipment and driver criteria, and competition between modes would have to be addressed.

In the area of loading units, too, recent technological and industry developments suggest that there are opportunities to consider measures in support of loading units that can equally be transported by road, rail or water.

5. GREEN CORRIDORS

A number of initiatives are coming together to promote sustainable and intelligent freight corridors, including the work to establish a freight-oriented railway network and to promote “Motorways of the Sea” and inland waterway transport. These can be complemented through future efforts to create green road freight corridors with co-modal hubs.

With this in mind, actions could be undertaken along select freight transport corridors to promote environmentally sound, energy-efficient and highly economical freight transport and logistics, including trialling the roll-out of ITS and innovative transport, energy-efficient and environment-friendly technologies or administrative cooperation in support of paperless regulatory compliance.

6. URBAN TRANSPORT

Freight transport to/from and in city areas is an essential element of the quality of life of the 80% of Europe's population that live in urban areas. Freight distribution in urban environments also creates a number of challenges for citizens.

A holistic vision at the local level would be needed to consider all urban logistics together as a single logistics network that covers passenger and freight transport, and that pays attention to the aspects of land use planning, environmental considerations, traffic management and a number of other factors.

The Commission services could function as a catalyst to change by bringing urban areas together towards a general framework consisting of a set of recommendations, indicators or standards for urban logistics, including freight deliveries and delivery vehicles, which could be adapted locally for different circumstances.

Furthermore, the freight part of CIVITAS could be re-enforced towards a better co-ordination, and perhaps even integration, between passengers and freight transport.

These and other areas can be further explored in the context of the forthcoming Green Paper on Urban Transport.