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Brussels News

CLECAT ROAD INSTITUTE MEETS

The CLECAT Road Logistics Institute met this week online to exchange views on developments affecting road transport and logistics at national level, including on the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 crisis. Members reported that goods continued to move throughout Europe, with freight forwarders and logistics service providers having adapted quickly to the ever-changing COVID-19 restrictions put in place by national governments. However, the situation was normalising in several parts of Europe. Members also received reports and exchanged views on the major upcoming initiatives from the Commission in 2021.

CLECAT will next week publish its position paper on the set of legislative proposals “Fit for 55”, which will be published in June to implement the ambition to achieve “at least 55% emission reductions by 2030”, including aviation and maritime alternative fuels initiatives; the revision of the alternative fuels infrastructure directive, and a reform of the Emissions Trading System. For road transport, CLECAT wants to ensure a steady and increasing supply of zero-emission trucks by ensuring mandatory targets for alternative fuels infrastructure in the TEN-T guidelines, the revision



of the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive (AFID) which CLECAT would like to see turned into a Regulation and binding national targets for alternative fuel infrastructure development.

Members also discussed the progress on the Eurovignette Directive, which is highly important for the realisation of the Green Deal, providing for strong incentives for the decarbonisation of the road transport sector. It was noted that the gap between the position of the Parliament and that of the Council is quite substantial, but there was optimism by the institutions about workable solutions.

Members also reviewed the CLECAT response to the consultation of the TEN-T guidelines, which will be submitted next week. The TEN-T policy should focus on completing the TEN-T core network by 2030 and the comprehensive network by 2050, and improving the quality of the network by investing in robust and reliable cross-border infrastructure. The TEN-T network design needs to be more efficient in order to reduce the energy demand of the transport sector and ease traffic flows. For this, we need robust, well maintained infrastructure and harmonised interoperability standards in order to cross borders efficiently.

Rail

COMMISSION PUBLISHES STUDY ON RAIL FREIGHT CORRIDORS

The European Commission has published its [final report](#) on the findings of the support study of the evaluation of Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight (the RFC Regulation). The Regulation has established rules for the organisation of international rail corridors with a view to the development of a European railway network for competitive freight. The Regulation sets out the rules for the selection, organisation, management and the indicative investment planning of rail freight corridors.

The Regulation provides tools for improving the competitiveness of railways and for contributing to the achievement of a common EU transport policy. The evolution of market performance indicators (i.e. on punctuality, costs of transport, reliability, commercial speed, etc.) shows that the improvement of competitiveness of the railways has only been achieved to a very limited extent.

The analysis is based on data collected from a range of primary and secondary sources, as well as direct input from concerned stakeholders, including CLECAT, that was collected using interviews and surveys with national authorities, the rail industry and an open public consultation. CLECAT's Rail Freight Institute, contributed to the evaluation of the RFC Regulation and will analyse the results of the study in-depth in view of further contributing to the evaluation process.

SEMI-TRAILER TRANSPORT ON POCKET WAGONS RESUMES IN DK

On 26 April, the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) announced that the way has been paved for updated risk mitigating measures to resume the transport on pocket wagons on the Great Belt Bridge, as published by the Danish National Safety Authority.

Following the 13.01.2021 incident on the Great Belt Bridge in Denmark, which happened at the same location as the severe accident of 02.01.2019, the Danish National Safety Authority imposed immediate measures which in practice have stopped the transport of semi-trailers on pocket wagons. Understanding the impact this ban has on rail freight transport companies and the need to urgently



find solutions, ERA established a [Joint Network Secretariat \(JNS\) Urgent Procedure](#) Task Force. This Task Force aims at identifying short-term risk mitigation measures in order to resume as soon as possible the transport of semi-trailers on pocket wagons on the Danish network and in particular on the Great Belt bridge.

The Task Force, coordinated by ERA, was composed of representatives from the national safety authorities of Denmark, Sweden, Germany and The Netherlands, as well as experts from the railway sector. On basis of the discussions, the Danish Civil Aviation and Railway Authority has [imposed a new set of risk mitigation measures](#) to replace the current immediate measures that have prevented the transport of semi-trailers on pocket wagons on the Danish network, and in particular on the Great Belt bridge. Furthermore, the Task Force concluded that [eight aspects will have to be treated further within the on-going JNS Normal Procedure](#) on the Great Belt accident/incident. The outcome of the Normal Procedure could replace the set of risk mitigation measures imposed by NSA DK for the transport of semi-trailers on pocket wagons.

Source: [ERA](#)

COMMISSIONER VĂLEAN HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF RAIL FREIGHT

On 22 April, EU Commissioner for Transport Adina Vălean [confirmed](#) that the Commission considers rail freight transport a strategic priority within its work relating to the EU Green Deal and the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy. The Commissioner noted this in response to a [parliamentary question](#) on the role and future of rail freight transport relating to Regulation (EU) 2020/14291 which establishes measures for a sustainable rail market in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.

She noted that the Commission considers that the Regulation provides Member States with effective measures to counteract the negative economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission has extended the validity period of the Regulation until 30 June 2021. If the negative effects of the pandemic persist, the Commission considers a further prolongation of six months. The wide application of these measures shall support the business continuity of rail transport and its recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

She noted that the milestones for rail freight are a 50% increase in rail freight traffic by 2030 and double by 2050, compared to 2015, highlighting that rail freight needs more and better capacity via strengthened investments and network management. The Commission will propose the revision of the Regulations governing Rail Freight Corridors (RFCs) and the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T), with complementary measures aimed to integrate rail more fully in multimodal logistics.

Source: [European Parliament](#)

ERA WEBINAR ON RAIL FREIGHT AND CLIMATE GOALS

On 20 May, the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) is organising a webinar in the ambit of the European Year of Rail 2021, entitled “How rail freight helps achieving climate goals”. In view of the European Green Deal’s objective of doubling rail freight by 2050, ERA will present the second part of the report “Fostering the railway sector through the European Green Deal”.

More information and the participation link can be found [here](#).



Maritime

SHIPPER-CARRIER RELATIONS AT LOWEST LEVEL



The maritime consultant Drewry has evaluated the relationship between freight forwarders, shippers and shipping lines and noted that a “short-sighted” approach by shipping lines is driving the degeneration of relationships with their contract shipper customers that could harm them in the future.

One of several shippers surveyed by the consultant said things had reached an all-time low. ‘Relationships with carriers count for nothing these days,’ said one large European

shipper. ‘The carriers are very opportunistic and take high-rate spot shipments rather than contract shipments – it is all about money.’ The consultant noted the carriers’ practice, which tend to favour higher rate spot shipments rather than contract shipments: ‘In the current under-supplied market, it is to be expected that newly empowered carriers set limits on how much volume they are prepared to allocate to contract shippers, who tend to pay less than spot shippers and NVOCCs.’

Drewry predicts that Asia-to-Europe spot rates will rise again in May, having declined slightly over recent weeks (but remaining at ‘extreme’ rate levels). There is also a phenomenon of contagion, where extreme freight rates spread from trade route to trade route. This happened last year, when extreme rates on the Transpacific spot market were followed by extreme rates on Asia-Europe.

Freight forwarder DSV Panalpina CEO Jens Bjørn Andersen noted to Shipping Watch that ‘the transport of goods is more expensive than ever, while the quality of service is worse than ever. It is an unfortunate combination. Service reliability sits below 40 percent in the beginning of the year, down from the usual 70-80 percent. Obviously, this is unacceptable to our customers,’ Andersen says.

Source [The Loadstar](#), [Shippingwatch](#)

EP CALLS FOR A CLEANER MARITIME TRANSPORT

On Tuesday 27 April, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on technical and operational measures for more efficient and cleaner maritime transport. MEPs noted that international shipping emits around 940 million tonnes of CO₂ annually and is responsible for approximately 2.5% of global greenhouse gases emissions. They highlight that these emissions are projected to increase significantly if mitigation measures are not swiftly introduced. The Parliament therefore advocates for a climate neutral transition of the maritime transport sector by 2050 that should be backed by proper funding, research and innovation in clean technologies and fuels.

As part of the decarbonisation efforts, the adopted text refers to the European Parliament’s [previous call](#) for shipping companies to achieve a 40% reduction in emissions by 2030 and the inclusion of maritime transport in the EU Emissions Trading Systems. The emission control should not be limited



to CO₂ emissions only – MEPs also stress the urgent health and environmental need to establish a sulphur and nitrogen emission control areas in Mediterranean that could be extended to all EU seas.

In order to achieve significant cuts in shipping emissions, the resolution demands the gradual phasing out of heavy fuel oil in ships and ‘deplores the distortion of competition on the European market between fossil energies, which benefit from more favourable tax treatment, and clean alternative fuels from renewable sources.’

MEPs urge the Commission to address this situation and put incentives, including through tax exemptions, to promote the use of alternatives to heavy fuels. LNG and LNG infrastructure are considered by the text as one of the transitional technologies towards zero-emission alternatives in the maritime sector.

Air

UPDATED ICAO AIR CARGO PRIORITY BRIEF

On 19 April, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) published an updated version of its [policy brief on air cargo](#), which outlines a number of key considerations and main recommendations for the industry in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In its considerations, ICAO notes the criticality of the air cargo supply chains to immediate population needs and pandemic response efforts worldwide, as well as to surging e-commerce and the successful and speedy revival of national and regional economies, post-pandemic. It notes that the successful global distribution of the time-sensitive COVID-19 vaccines strongly relies on the speed and dependability of air connectivity. In that regard, ICAO emphasises that regulatory adaptations such as extended traffic rights and multilateral legal instruments, supported by strengthened regional and sectoral cooperation, will help to achieve greater vaccine transport efficiency and support global economic recovery. Moreover, it argues that the promotion of contact-free digital tools and processes will accelerate the establishment of Public Health Corridors (PHCs) and related pandemic recovery initiatives, rapidly and positively transforming air cargo safety, security, and facilitation.

As regards the recommendations, ICAO suggests the facilitation of safe, secure and more efficient air cargo movement through the accelerated adoption of digital and emerging technologies, including the utilisation of harmonised electronic documents and data exchange. It further recommends considering economic regulatory measures where needed for air operators in order to sustain or augment current air cargo capacity and supply chains. Furthermore, an emphasis is put on strengthening information sharing, as well as ensuring awareness of all related statements and coordination on behalf of ICAO and other UN system agencies and industry bodies, in addition to ICAO State Letters and guidelines issued.

The full priority brief is available [here](#).

EASA UPDATE ON AVIATION SAFETY DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

On 30 April, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) [published](#) an updated review of aviation safety issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, originally [published](#) in 2020. Throughout



the pandemic the Agency has worked closely with Member State regulators and industry partners to continually monitor the safety situation so that guidance and safety promotion material has been able to evolve to the needs of the industry.

The review, which is based on a continuous monitoring and updating to the evolving need of the industry, aims to support the industry in their preparations for an increase in flying activity over the coming months. Organisations and Member States should evaluate the applicability of the safety issues listed in the review to their own organisation and, where applicable, capture them in their SMS.

Safety issues are set out in a number of areas, including Management Systems, Human Performance, Training, Checking and Recency, as well as Infrastructure and Equipment. The review identified new safety issues in addition to those previously identified, including, *inter alia*, increase of cyber-security issues related to the pandemic situation, reduction in training effectiveness due to COVID-19 restrictions, rapid growth of cargo operations during the pandemic, as well as reduction in Contracted Fees to Ground Handling Service Providers.

Further information on the review and material on individual safety issues can be found on the [EASA Air Ops Community Site](#).

Source: [EASA](#)

Brexit

EU RATIFIES POST-BREXIT TRADE DEAL

On 27 April, the European Parliament [voted](#) with a large majority in favour of granting its consent to the conclusion of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The Parliament [welcomed](#) the agreement, as it limits the negative consequences of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, which it considers a "historic mistake" as no third country can enjoy the same benefits as an EU member. The zero quotas and zero tariffs trade agreement between the EU and the UK are viewed positively by MEPs and guarantees on fair competition rules could serve as a model for future trade agreements.



However, MEPs regret that the UK did not want the agreement to extend to foreign, security and development policies. Pointing to preserving peace on the island of Ireland, MEPs condemn the UK's recent unilateral actions that are in breach of the Withdrawal Agreement. They call on the UK government "to act in good faith and fully implement the terms of the agreements which it has signed", including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, and apply them based on a timetable jointly set up with the

European Commission. MEPs also underline that Parliament must play a full role in monitoring how the agreement is applied, including by being involved in unilateral EU actions under the agreement and having its views taken into account.

On 29 April, the EU Council adopted a [decision](#) on the conclusion of the EU-UK TCA, as the last step for the EU in the ratification process. The agreement will officially enter into force on 1 May.



Customs and Trade

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON UCC IMPLEMENTATION

Earlier this week, the European Commission launched a [public consultation](#) to gather views on the implementation of the Union Customs Code (the UCC), which will remain open until 19 July 2021. The Commission would like to know whether, the customs rules and customs electronic systems deployed until the end of 2020 have achieved predictable, streamlined and simplified customs processes and a paperless environment; as well as whether the UCC is sufficiently flexible to face crises such as Covid-19 and/or to new business models such as e-commerce. Contributions are sought in particular from economic operators in the area of customs (e.g. import/export SMEs, companies, customs brokers, professionals in the trade supply chain, etc.), customs authorities, national authorities in relevant areas (e.g. market surveillance, antifraud, health and safety compliance, etc.), consumers, private citizens, academics.

Interested parties can contribute to this consultation by filling in an online questionnaire, which is available in some or all official EU languages. The views gathered will be used to inform the conclusions of the interim evaluation of the UCC that the Commission committed to carrying out in a 2018 [report](#) to the European Parliament and to the Council. The evaluation will support decisions on a future revision of the UCC.

More information on the UCC legal and IT package and its state of implementation is available [here](#).

WTO REPORTS PROGRESS IN GLOBAL TRADE FACILITATION



WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION

Between 22 and 23 April, at a meeting of the Committee on Trade Facilitation, the World Trade Organization (WTO) discussed the latest progress in implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which contains provisions for expediting the movement, release, and clearance of goods,

including goods in transit. It also sets out measures for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues.

According to a report given by the WTO Secretariat, [the current rate of implementation of TFA commitments](#) stood at 70.1% for the entire WTO membership as of 22 April. This figure is expected to rise to 83% by 2023 based on the notifications members had submitted on their respective implementation dates. Broken down by level of development, the current rate of implementation equates to a 100% of implementation by developed members and 61% among developing members and least developed countries (LDCs). The WTO also discussed technical assistance needs and available support to fully implement the TFA.

The WTO continued to discuss the first-ever review of TFA implementation, which is due this year, four years after the Agreement's entry into force on 22 February 2017. In that regard, members have suggested analysing the provision of technical assistance and capacity building and the impact of COVID-19 on LDCs.

Source: [World Trade Organization](#)



Sustainable Logistics

MAKING ZERO-EMISSION ROAD FREIGHT A REALITY

The European Clean Trucking Alliance (ECTA), a coalition of European key players in road freight has released [a new position paper](#) that urges the Commission to develop a policy framework to make zero-emission freight a reality. The landscape of road transport decarbonization is changing: truck manufacturers are ramping up their efforts to make more sustainable trucks and zero-emission trucks are arriving on the market. However, the infrastructure to operate such vehicles is largely missing, hampering the transition towards greener freight mobility.

The Alliance notes that the upcoming EU's Fit for 55 package, expected to be released in June, will shape decisive regulations for the future of road transport. The upcoming revisions are an opportunity to ensure seamless cross-border operations and regional delivery operations, develop legislation for zero-emissions truck infrastructure across the EU, facilitate the transformation of the TEN-T core network corridors in zero-emission freight corridors by 2027.

Ensuring the necessary infrastructure for zero-emission vans across Europe is necessary to tackle CO2 emissions, as they are responsible for 22% of road transport emissions while accounting for only 2% of vehicles on the road. Despite this alarming situation, only 1.4% of new vans registered in the EU in 2019 was electric and according to preliminary data only 2% in 2021.

To stay on course for zero emissions by 2050, the Alliance wants to take the opportunity to make almost CO2-free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030 and implement a policy framework that ensures the proper supply, use and development of zero-emission vans and their infrastructure.

The full position paper is available [here](#).

EC SUPPORTS NEW PROJECTS IN TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

The European Climate, Infrastructure, and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) [announced](#) on 28 April that the EU supports 12 new projects that will contribute towards the goal of making the transport sector more environmentally performant by facilitating the use of alternative fuels as well as improving safety and sustainability of European rail transport. Eight of the projects will deploy key alternative fuel infrastructure (electricity, hydrogen or liquefied natural gas for road vehicles). They will allow the deployment, among others, of:

- 276 fast e-charging stations in Italy
- 183 fast and ultrafast e-charging stations in Portugal and Spain
- The fitting of refuelling (electric + bioCNG) infrastructure to 6 bus depots in Paris (France)
- 2 fixed and 1 mobile hydrogen refuelling stations in Poland
- 8 hydrogen refuelling stations and 1 hydrogen production electrolyser as well as 58 fuel cell hydrogen buses in France
- 1 Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) bunkering vessel in Italy to supply LNG to maritime vessels

The full list of the projects is available [here](#).



Forthcoming Events

CLECAT MEETINGS

CLECAT Board meeting

11 May 2021, Online

CLECAT Customs and Indirect Taxation Institute

31 May 2021, Online

CLECAT Air Logistics Institute

8 June 2021, Online

CLECAT Security Institute

8 June 2021, Online

CLECAT Rail Logistics Institute

23 June 2021, Online

EU MEETINGS

Council of the European Union

Transport Council

3 June 2021, Luxembourg

Environment Council

21 June 2021, Luxembourg

European Parliament

European Parliament Transport Committee

10 May 2021, Brussels

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