

CLTM/B3740/MBI

Brussels, 19 October 2007

## **IRU POSITION ON THE USE OF THE EUROPEAN MODULAR CONCEPT**

**IRU Position on the use of the European Modular Concept, adopted by the IRU Goods Transport Liaison Committee to the EU.**

### **I. ANALYSIS**

- Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, economic development has been driven by globalisation. The market is global for everyone and the economic driving force will also seek optimal localisation for its business activities. This globalisation process will lead to a dramatic increase not only in trade and transport but also in specific customer demand. Road freight transport is a production tool and during the period 1995-2005, freight transport demand had an average annual growth of 2.8%.
- Industry is highlighting more and more capacity constraints in freight transport, especially in road freight transport due to driver shortage, changing production processes, trade and above all, logistics chains. The overall aim is to make road circulation more efficient, and we need options that provide alternatives that are compatible with intermodal transport. Industry considers that not enough necessary accompanying measures are put in place or implemented to accompany these developments. Longer truck combinations are considered as a logistics approach and as a potential contribution to solving the capacity problem.
- In the 2006 Communication on Freight Transport Logistics, the EU Commission gave the topic an additional dimension by mentioning that the weights and dimensions of vehicles should be re-examined. Both the European Parliament and Council agree on the need for a re-examination in framework of the needs of freight transport logistics chains. The EP is even calling for a conditional further development of the European Modular Concept.
- More and more study material is becoming available on the opportunities and challenges of the European modular concept. A study was undertaken by the German Motorway Authorities (BaST). A report exists on the results of the Dutch tests. Different studies have been made by the Swedish TFK Institute. In Belgium two studies are available. The EU Commission has also launched a study. Looking beyond our European borders, also Canada has looked into the opportunities and challenges of long truck combinations.
- Based on the scientific studies and their findings the IRU has prepared in February 2007, an analysis (CLTM/B3579) of the facts that were available on the European

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Modular Concept and concluded that its use is feasible.

- On 28 June 2007, the IRU organised a seminar bringing together experts from the operating sector as well as from the authorities to discuss the feasibility of the use of the European Modular Concept. The seminar confirmed the findings of the IRU analysis, but identified a number of challenges in the field of road infrastructure, turning circle performance, truck parking lots and road safety. These challenges can however be overcome with time and can be not really be considered as barriers to the use of European Modular Concept combinations.

## **II. IRU POSITION**

- The IRU recognises that on the basis of current trials, the European Modular Concept offers a number of advantages in the field of increased efficiency, possibility to carry the same load with fewer vehicles, better use of an increasingly limited number of professional drivers, more available capacity, better compatibility with other freight modes, less fuel consumption, reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, reduced road wear due to a higher number of axles and a reduced per axle weight, but that the concept may not be universally applicable throughout the EU at this stage.
- The IRU encourages Member States to undertake proper tests to establish whether and which European Modular Concept Vehicle Combinations can be used and what modifications would be needed to permit their use.
- The EU Institutions should use available research and test results to find solutions to the existing challenges and work out harmonised European rules which could lead to the use of European Modular Concept combinations for intra-Community transport in due course.

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