

**M. Burkhardt**

**Welcome address to the DIOMIS Conference in Paris, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the DIOMIS conference.

The subject of this conference is not more and not less than the future of combined transport, which is of course the central subject for the 20 combined transport operators who are members of the International Union of Combined Transport Companies UIRR. The overall task of our member operators is to shift traffic from road to rail.

For the purposes of supporting the development of Combined Transport, UIRR is continuing to get involved in various projects, including the major DIOMIS study.

Nearly 20 years ago, at the end of the nineteen eighties, the UIC and the UIRR had already commissioned a study, in this case with the consultant A.T. Kearney which caused at that time quite a sensation.

It was forecasted that under a number of precise conditions, **a tripling of international CT** between 1987 and 2005 seemed to be probable.

The analysis at that time was done in depth and with care.

Nevertheless as the results seemed quite courageous one or the other professional did not really believe in it, probably thinking that UIC and UIRR standing behind this study had dressed up the figures in their interest. Mr. Peetermans who sat together with me on the steering committee at that time may certainly confirm this.

But this was not the case. The study was realistic and today we know that the reality actually exceeded even the most optimistic scenario.

People often underestimate just how dynamic Combined Transport is. What is the reason for this? It is known that conventional rail freight traffic is more or less stagnating. In the new EU member states rail freight traffic is even declining! – It is ignored that on the contrary the combined transport growth outstrips even that of road freight transport!

By the way, I think we as experts are not completely innocent and mislead sometimes others and even ourselves. Of course, we are active especially in the problematic areas of combined transport and are mainly trying to overcome obstacles.

We speak about:

- capacity restrictions,
- bad quality,
- not sufficient rotation of the rolling material,
- missing interoperability,
- ...and so on!

And last but not least the combined transport operators, our members, often hesitate to express too much optimism, fearing in a world of not yet competed competition on rail this would lead railway undertakings into temptation to seek the easy way by raising prices and thus limiting the growth instead of taking the more painful path, to process more freight trains and to get more productivity out of the system. But the latter is the only way to ensure the future of rail and to safeguard employment!

For all these reasons we tend to ignore ourselves the overwhelming progress we nevertheless are achieving!

What is important: The DIOMIS study now **confirms the enormous potential for growth** which remains unchanged. So we have all reasons to be optimistic and to show this optimism.

The DIOMIS final report "Agenda 2015 for Combined Transport in Europe" which will be presented and discussed today is designed to shake up the decision-makers and to encourage them to prepare for a larger number of transfers of traffic to the railways.

All actors have to be prepared in order to realise this growth which is in the interest of our society - as rail transport is the most environment friendly transport mode.

On the one hand the EU Member States are asked to put more into this. The States are expected to give even greater importance to extending the capacities of conventional routes for rail freight transport. This does cost money but this does not necessarily mean expensive new routes; often it is simply a matter of getting rid of local bottlenecks and creating conditions designed to promote longer, heavier trains and to increase the capacities of terminals on international lines.

However, first and foremost DIOMIS shows to railway undertakings, combined transport operators and terminal operators, what we can do by ourselves.

The study sets out an analysis of ideas and resources which are already being used by a few railway undertakings and CT operators. This rather complete analysis and presentation of “best practice” is worth to be carefully examined by all actors with a view to transferring more traffic to the railways.

Let me give some examples:

- Strengthening the use of full trains and shuttles which could lead to a more effective exploitation of the infrastructure.
- By improving train punctuality, more incoming wagons could be available again to carry freight on the return journey on the same day. Productivity gains could be made by making better use of the wagons and engines.
- The optimisation of commercial models and the use of scheduling software would also help to increase the use of the capacities.
- The use of the most suitable types of wagon can increase the number of loading units which can be transported with given train lengths.
- Closer co-ordination between long distance rail transport and the last mile feeder service in the terminals, longer opening hours, a better distribution of train arrivals and departures, in-house marshalling services, automatic identification of the loading units, financial incentives for customers, for a rapid removal of the loading units – there are numerous ways of increasing the productivity of transshipment areas.

The participants in the combined transport chain will find a large number of ideas on how to improve the range of CT services in the results of the DIOMIS study.

If they are put into practice, I am convinced that **once again in 2015 we will see that the development of combined transport exceeded even the ambitious forecasts of the DIOMIS study which is our subject of today.**

Thank you and let us have a lively and interesting discussion about the future of combined transport.