

December 06

Intermodal Door-To-Door Services

Innovative solutions mark the shift towards intermodal transport. The first international workshop of the EU-funded PROMIT project (Promoting Innovative Intermodal Freight Transport), which took place in Basle in November 2006, focussed on “Intermodal door-to-door services”. The attendee feedback was excellent. They confirmed that the workshop had a great format providing excellent sessions and excellent speakers from the world of politics and business. About 100 attendees visited different intermodal terminals in Basle.

Users of intermodal transport require high quality and low-cost door-to-door routing to remain successful in this highly competitive market. Shifting freight transport from the road to other modes of transport causes barriers and problems in terms of organization, technology, economy as well as infrastructure and logistics. Success models and recommendations on how to solve the current problems were presented during the PROMIT workshop with a good cross-section of attendees from various industries: intermodal operators, shipping agents from trade and industry, service providers as well as representatives of research institutes, harbours and inland ports, and politicians.

Attendees from many different European countries wanted to learn more about the latest trends and solutions. They were extremely pleased about the selection of high-profile speakers, the structure of the workshop and the panel discussions. The speakers presented practice-based solutions for the following three major modes: rail & road, inland waterway and short sea shipping.

From road to rail to road

Transalpine freight transport, for instance, faces the following challenges when it comes to door-to-door services. All major combined transport operators, HUPAC and ICF, for example, offer area-wide service networks with international interchange points and distribution centres. It is also important to constantly improve operational efficiency. The approaches developed within the EU-projects AlpFRail and BRAVO affirm this trend. Further important factors are partnerships, customer information systems, management of the entire transport chain as well as quality standards that have to be met by all parties involved.

According to the attendees, a number of obstacles, such as a lack of reliable services, low priority in rail transport compared to passenger transport, limited capacities concerning terminals and train connections, and last but not least the cost, must be removed in intermodal transalpine transport. Today,

many success factors confirm the trend towards intermodal transport: the cooperation between the different parties involved in the intermodal transport business, lower prices compared to road transport, reliable services and the focus on corridors or terminals. In addition, intermodal transport provides the opportunity to offer 24-hour transport services, especially across the Alps. HGV transport, on the other hand, is more restricted due to the ban on night driving in Austria and Switzerland. It would be necessary to enhance intermodal services by offering a 24-hour service at the terminal and more flexible hours for collection and delivery on the part of the shipping agents.

However, political measures are an pivotal factor in the progression of intermodal transport: toll on heavy transportation (heavy traffic tax dependent of mileage (LSVA)), night-time lorry ban as well as financial support for terminals and train operation in combined transport. Switzerland sees itself as one of the pioneers in this field. A higher priority given to freight trains that operate on improved railway tracks would complete the process.

In the first session the attendees agreed that it is important to strengthen customer ties by providing reliable services. The International Union of combined Road-Rail transport companies (UIRR) provides the CESAR platform. It includes services, such as online booking, tracking&tracing, e-payment services and the "Rolling Motorway". More and more shipping agents are using these helpful tools. Budapest's Intermodal Logistic Centre (BILK), Hungary's largest logistics park is also one of the largest European terminals for intermodal transport and is becoming one of the most important hub between Southern and Eastern Europe. BILK also places a major emphasis on quality. It is now possible to plan pre- and on-carriage at the terminal – a real door-to-door service.

Intermodal planning inside out: inland waterway and short sea shipping

According to all participants of this session, inland navigation will be a very promising transport mode for intra-European shipping. Apart from the main route along the Rhein river, they see emerging markets along the Seine and Donau rivers.

At the port of Amsterdam there is a ship that also functions as a terminal. A crane is mounted on the ship for break-bulk traffic for containers from Amsterdam and its surrounding area. Inland vessels used as transport modes with network options? Inland vessels, that are independent of terminals for container loading and unloading, might become an alternative to HGVs, especially in conurbations.

The EU-project INTERMODESHIP is an innovative door-to-door waterborne solution with great potential. This river-lake-ship prototype has been developed for roll-on-roll-off (RoRo) transport. The route between Duisburg (Germany) and Karlstadt (Lake Vänern, Sweden) was taken as an example to create a waterborne transport concept for trailer transports via the Rhein – North Sea – Göta Channel route. The ship can carry up to 48 trailers or containers divided into 4 rows and three tiers. The experts are currently

developing a regularly scheduled service that includes transport between Duisburg, England and Sweden. Compared to HGV transport INTERMODESHIP offers major advantages: lower personnel and fuel costs, plus reduced costs for door-to-door services. One should take advantage of this savings potential. INTERMODESHIP is definitely an economic and eco-friendly alternative to traffic-jam-sensitive road transport.

A shift of reloading points

In European short-sea operations there is a shift in cargo handling from major ports to smaller reloading points, offering traffic-jam-free transshipment. Shipping companies will benefit from RoRo transport services, especially from cost-effective cargo handling at the port. Stora Enso, the Finnish-Swedish forest products company, for instance, developed a “general” solution that can carry different load units. This system is based on Stora Enso’s special Secu-Box made for short-sea operations. As Stora Enso’s containers are not craneable, the company made a virtue out of necessity. It developed a reloading technology vehicle that can also move (piled) sea containers on a roll-on-roll-off basis. An efficient use of space is the result. The cassettes with their weatherproof casing, which have originally been developed for paper roll transports, can also be used for other types of cargo and are suitable for different transport modes.

PROMIT: Intermodal traffic – transport system with great potential

There are currently too few experts to quickly spread the good news about new solutions. PROMIT is focussing on the different aspects of intermodal transport in order to identify innovative, wide-ranging approaches and to strengthen the competitiveness of this transport sector. All project members will focus on and analyse in detail organisation and business models, infrastructure, information and communication technologies, operation and services as well as security, safety, legislation and policy.

The 3-year project started on 1st March 2006. PTV AG is in charge of the project management. Nine companies from Germany, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands and Switzerland are involved in the project with a budget amounting to €2,808,600.00. It is funded by the European Commission within the 6th Framework Programme.

The next PROMIT workshop entitled “Intermodal Transport Safety” will take place in Thessaloniki, Greece, on 8th and 9th February 2007.

Practical advice: The steering committee

Internationally renown institutions have become a member of the steering committee which provides all project members with practical advice and organises joint activities through co-operations. The members of the steering committee are the Short Sea Promotion Centre Holland (SPC), the European Intermodal

Background Information



Association (EIA) and the Studiengesellschaft für den kombinierten Verkehr e.V (research association for intermodal transport – (SGKV))

The SPC promotes short sea transport for companies interested in shifting freight transport to European waterways. The SCP Holland is considered to be the basic model for all other SCPs. The institution is a founding member of the European Shortsea Network that consists of 20 Shortsea Promotion Centres.

The EIA is the European platform for sustainable and innovative intermodal transport concepts and technologies. The 'Intermodal Award' for Intermodal Best Practice is an EIA initiative to stimulate innovative solutions for the intermodal industry.

The SGKV was founded in 1928 with the aim to promote intermodal transport in Germany. Its members are German companies from different industries, transportation professionals and Germany's Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs.

In March 2007 PROMIT and EIA will organise a conference in Antwerp to present EIA best practices and PROMIT innovations.

Images



The PROMIT workshop attendees visited intermodal terminals in Basle.

For more information visit:

http://www.ptv.de/cgi-bin/logistics/log_fimv.pl#PROMIT

www.promit-project.net