

# **BULLETIN** **II/2008**

## **Editorial**

The sectorial traffic ban on the Inntal motorway in Austria came into effect at the beginning of May this year. In a blatant disregard for the principle of a free exchange of goods and a free choice of the mode of transport, it forbids the carriage of debris, stones, earth and excavated material of more than 7.5 tonnes by truck on the 84 km long stretch between Kufstein and Innsbruck. While the EU issued an injunction against the first attempt by Tyrolean politicians to restrict traffic in 2003, it has decided to allow the ban to remain in place this time. The restrictions will even be extended to cover further goods as from January 2009.

Austria was given time until the middle of June to formulate a second response to the EU. Now the ball is back in the EU's court. The UECC expects the European Commission to make every effort to put a stop to this dangerous precedent.

Local authorities cannot be allowed to pass laws that are in breach of superordinate EU legislation in order to further their own advantages at the expense of other regions. As experience shows, such measures do not achieve the desired result of a modal shift of freight traffic to the railways, but only oblige the transport companies to find other routes or distribute their cargo among more, smaller vehicles.

Dr. Rainer Füeg  
Secretary General

<b>Table of contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Resolutions of the UECC	2
Chambers demand the extension of west-east axes	2
Sectorial traffic ban in the Inntal still stands	3
Danube waterway: Austria proposes measures for 2008	3
New member of the UECC	3
Aims of the UECC summarised in new brochure	4
Changes within the Executive Committee	4
General Assembly 2008	4
Working group "Transport"	4
Agenda 2008	6

## **July 2008**

### **Editor:**

Union of European Chambers  
of Commerce and Industry  
General Secretariat  
Aeschenvorstadt 67  
CH-4010 Basel  
Tel.: 0041 61 270 60 10  
Fax: 0041 61 270 60 05  
Internet: <http://www.uecc.org>  
E-mail: [r.fueeg@uecc.org](mailto:r.fueeg@uecc.org)

## Resolutions

### Wisenberg tunnel and the Basel bypass

In Mai 2008, the UECC called upon the members of the Swiss Council of States to promote the upgrading of access routes to the New Railway Link through the Alps (NRLA).

The Rotterdam-Genoa railway axis (TEN Project 24) is one of the major north-south connections for European railfreight. Bottlenecks and missing links on the access routes to the north of the NRLA must be eliminated in order to meet the requirements of the transport industry and guarantee an optimal utilisation of the capacities offered by the new Lötschberg and Gotthard tunnels. Freight traffic is estimated to grow at a rate of 32 % to 72 %.

The UECC summed up its demands as follows:

- The north-south railway axis must be equipped to deal with the expected increase in railfreight traffic;
- Switzerland must fulfil its international agreements with the EU;
- Construction of a third tunnel through the Jura (the Wisenbergtunnel) and measures to ease traffic congestion in the Basel region by building a new bypass must form an integral part of Switzerland's plans for the future development of its train infrastructure;
- Planning and financing procedures must be set in motion as soon as possible so that the required infrastructure upgrades can be finalised on schedule.

### Chambers demand extension of east-west transport corridors



German, Polish and Czech Chambers form the KEO

Eight years ago, thirty German, Polish and Czech Chambers of Commerce on both sides of the Elbe and Oder rivers formed an association (KEO) aimed at furthering the interests of their regions' business communities on a national and European level. Economic relations between the new German states and their eastern neighbours have intensified since Poland and the Czech Republic joined the EU in 2004. The development of a high-capacity transport

infrastructure is indispensable if the region is to handle the growth in trade flows and ensure further economic growth. After decades of neglect and despite remarkable progress in the upgrading of major transport routes since 1990 – such as "German Unity" project, the new motorway between Dresden and Prague, or the motorway from Wrocław to Gliwice – the Elbe/Oder region still lacks a large-scale crossborder transport network that meets the requirements of the market.

The Chambers launched their programme "Bridges over Elbe and Oder" four years ago, demanding the extension of road and above all rail and waterway connections on five transport axes. These links complement and enhance the Transeuropean projects proposed by the EU.

More details and further information on the association may be found on the website [www.kammerunion.de](http://www.kammerunion.de).

## Sectorial traffic ban in the Inntal still stands

In his reply to the UECC's position paper, Werner Faymann, the Austrian minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology, said that the sectorial traffic ban was part of a package of measures employed to protect the environment and the population from harmful substances. The measures were based on the Austrian law on immission control by which the EU directives on the protection of the air are implemented. The minister also pointed out that Austria and the state of Tyrol had supplied an adequate number of alternative modes of transport, and that existing rolling motorway facilities would be expanded further. More investments into infrastructures for combined transport are also planned.

The first phase of the ban came into effect on May 2, 2008 after attempts by the business community to secure a preliminary injunction failed. The second phase of the ban will become operative as from the beginning of 2009 if this cannot be prevented in time.



Reference: Die Presse, Vienna, 06.05.08

The European Commission has given Austria until June 9 to defend its position. The EU will decide on its next move on the basis of this reaction and the results of meetings with the Austrian authorities.

The UECC will continue its efforts to ensure that this new attempt to undermine the free exchange of goods in Europe is rejected.

## Danube waterway: Austria proposes measures for 2008

The Austrian federal government has clear plans for the extension of the Danube waterway for inland shipping in the medium term. For the implementation of the "national action plan for inland shipping on the Danube" about 420 million euros are budgeted until 2015, which should help deal with the expected two-fold increase of traffic volumes on the Austrian section of the river. Future plans also include the long overdue upgrading of the navigation channel between Vienna and the Slovak border.

The results of the environmental impact study currently under way and the "general authorisation notification" for the projects covering a total of 50 km should be available by the end of 2008.

This positively speedy procedure is in stark contrast to the situation in Germany, where no concrete progress has been made concerning the Straubing-Vilshofen bottleneck and where federal policy appears to attach only minor significance to inland shipping, as can be seen from the fact that this mode of transport is hardly mentioned in the government's current "masterplan for freight transport".

## New member of the UECC

The umbrella organisation of the Dutch Chambers of Commerce joined the UECC in

May 2008, bringing the number of Dutch member chambers up to 10.

## ***Aims of the UECC summarised in new brochure***

In May 2008, the UECC published a new brochure in English which summarises its aims and activities with regard to European transport policy. You will find a copy of the brochure attached to this bulletin.

For more copies please contact the UECC secretariat, Aeschenvorstadt 67, CH-4010 Basel, tel. 0041 61 270 60 10, fax 0041 61 270 50 05, e-mail: r.fueeg@uecc.org.

## ***Changes within the Executive Committee***

Anton Müller, Chamber of Commerce of Lower Austria, has resigned from the Executive Committee. Mathias Tromp, Chamber of Commerce of Berne, has been elected as a new representative of the Swiss national group.

Following the reorganisation of the Chambers of Commerce in the Netherlands, the Dutch national group will decide on the distribution of its seats on the Executive Committee this summer.

At its meeting in Stuttgart on June 20, 2008, the Executive Committee decided on several measures that are aimed at improving the efficiency and the impact of the UECC. Among other things, it was decided to hold the General Assembly in the first quarter of the year in future, to maintain only one working group and to give this group more competencies with respect to the drafting of resolutions and position papers.

## ***General Assembly 2008***

This year's General Assembly will take place in Basel on 25 September 2008. The invitations will be distributed to all members this summer.

The General Assembly provides a good opportunity to meet members of the Executive Committee and the Working Group and to discuss any comments or suggestions with regard to the UECC's position papers on transport policy.

## ***Working group "Transport"***

Dr. Hans-Jürgen Reichardt, tel. 0049 711 2005-280  
fax 0049 711 2005-429  
e-mail: hans-juergen.reichardt@stuttgart.ihk.de

### **TEN 17: Stuttgart 21/Stuttgart-Ulm**

At the meeting of the working group "Transports" on 29 May 2008, the EU coordinator for the TEN 17 project, Professor Peter Balasz, reported on the progress made on this axis. State-of-art transport networks are a prerequisite for strengthening the competitiveness of the European economies. The EU has therefore designated 30 priority projects, six of which are monitored by especially appointed coordinators. The aim of the TEN 17 project is to reduce travelling times on the entire stretch from currently 13.5 hours to 8 hours and to considerably expand today's capacities for freight traffic, which is intended to help ease congestion on the road networks.

A large part of the TGV Est has already been completed, and the Baudrecourt-Strasbourg section should be finished by 2010. The Munich-Salzburg line is expected to become operational by 2015. Linz-Vienna is already under construction, and work on the Stuttgart-Ulm section is scheduled to begin in 2010. A memorandum of understanding was signed in 2007, and an agreement on financing this section should be concluded this summer. Two associations aimed at promoting the project have been established: the Association TGV Est and the "Magistrale for Europe".

Although the EU has announced that it will provide more funding for the TEN projects than it has done in the past, the amount of financial backing still remains extremely modest in view of the pivotal role these connections play for the European economy.

Now that higher prices for agricultural produce have made European farmers more competitive, it is high time to rechannel the billions of funds hitherto spent on this industry into other projects that are important for Europe's future.

Moreover, it remains to be seen by which means capacities for freight traffic can be increased. In Europe, passenger traffic is still given priority over freight traffic for political reasons. However, and particularly for the new TEN projects, an improvement on this issue would be crucial, and more attention should be given to achieving a change in attitude already at the planning stage.

### **Draft bill on road pricing in the Netherlands**

The Netherlands are currently debating a new law governing the introduction of road tolls on motorways. It will not be a road tax disc but a charge that is based on the length of the distance travelled. Time and place of the journey, the type of vehicle and possibly also the amount of CO2 emissions will enter into the calculation. The new road pricing system is intended to be cost neutral, which means that certain other taxes levied today (for example the so-called car purchase tax or the motor vehicle tax) will be replaced. As previous experience with the introduction of new fees and duties has shown, this statement should be treated with a certain amount of scepticism. The draft bill does not explain how car drivers from other countries will be registered and taxed, or how negative consequences (impact on retail trade in the border regions, detour traffic using roads on the other side of the frontier) can be avoided. It also remains unclear when the new law will enter into effect, given the expected resistance from the population and the economy concerned.

### **EU directive on air quality**

The new EU air quality directive will enter into effect soon. Some of its provisions have been tightened, but, compared to the

previous version, the directive has also added certain improvements that were repeatedly demanded by the business community. For example, in the earlier text 80 % of the particulate matter measured in many places derived from natural sources, from households or industry, but the directive proposed measures that only affected the transport sector. Furthermore, it was possible (and usual practice) to carry out readings in specific areas and at specific times in order to achieve the desired results.

The new directive now refers to particulate matter that measures up to 2.5 micrometres, which rules out the majority of natural sources, households and industrial plants as emitters. The new values will apply as from 2010, and they are defined as those target figures that ought to be achieved by 2015. Only then will they become limit values that must not be exceeded. These ceilings will be further lowered in 2020. Measurement procedures will be standardised and defined in such a way that they provide average readings per country and not results for individual exposed areas. It will also be possible to calculate and exclude the amount of particulate matter stemming from natural sources. EU members must now transpose the new directive into national legislation within the next two years.

In light of the improvements provided by the new directive, the UECC supports a speedy implementation of its provisions in all EU member States. The EU should also quickly issue the remaining guidelines for the designation of areas in which pollutants are to be ascribed to natural resources so that the beneficial effects of the new regulations can be enjoyed as soon as possible.

The UECC has written letters to this effect to the relevant national and European institutions.

***Agenda 2008***

**Executive Committee:**

24 September 2008

Basel (CH)

**General Assembly:**

24/25 September 2008

Basel (CH)

The date for the next meeting of the working group is yet be determined.