

BULLETIN IV/2008

Editorial

2008 is drawing to a close – a year full of events whose repercussions will remain with us for a long time.

During the first six months, the European economy continued its upward trend, with the exception of some banks, and demand for the products and services of the transport industry remained high. Massive increases in fuel costs and delays caused by bottlenecks and other inadequacies in the transport infrastructure were the most pressing problems.

But then the debt bubble in the United States burst, plunging the world economy into a recession which will put an even stronger strain on European business in the coming year.

If the European programmes to stimulate the economy that have now been announced are also used for long overdue upgrades of transport networks, the current downturn will have one positive result, at least in the medium term.

In this spirit I would like to wish you all a happy and successful 2009.

*Michael G. König
President*

Table of Contents

	Page
<i>UECC rejects overtaking ban for trucks on dual carriageways</i>	2
<i>Slight relaxation of the traffic ban for trucks in the Inn Valley</i>	2
<i>Working group "Transport"</i>	3
<i>New member of the Executive Committee</i>	4
<i>Truck traffic bans in the Czech Republic</i>	4
<i>Germany invests in access routes to sea ports</i>	4
<i>Calendar 2009</i>	4

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UECC rejects overtaking ban for trucks on dual carriage ways

In a letter addressed to members of the European Parliament in November 2008, the UECC argued against the proposal for an overtaking ban for trucks on dual carriage ways:

The UECC attaches the highest priority to road safety. To this end, it advocates the construction and upgrading of motorways and dual carriageways, since all studies have shown that efficient, unobstructed transport networks help to ensure the highest degree of safety in road traffic.

The purpose of the high-performance road networks in Europe – in this case multi-lane motorways and dual carriageways – is the swift processing of large volumes of traffic. Restrictions that reduce the capacities of important infrastructures not only on a regional level but also on national and cross-border axes are therefore to be avoided.

The UECC calls upon the European Parliament to reject the written declaration proposed by Andreas Mölzer (MEP) with regards to the ban forbidding trucks to overtake on dual carriage ways, for the following reasons:

- A general overtaking ban for trucks on dual carriage ways leads to the formation of long lines of traffic on both lanes (on the right the trucks, on the left the cars and busses) with a relatively low average speed, which reduces the capacities of the motorway.
- The slowest vehicle in the line sets the average speed. This increases the risk of accidents at the end of the line when the fast-moving traffic catches up with the queue.

- Vehicles driving in such queues usually do not keep a sufficiently safe distance to the car ahead. Lack of patience, unexpected reactions and reduced levels of attention on the part of the drivers are all reasons that suggest that the proposed measure is unlikely to improve road safety.

- Furthermore, as already mentioned above, the proposed measure will cut back capacities on the motorways. This will lengthen travelling times and reduce the efficiency of road haulage services, which will also mean that the same quantity of consignments will have to be transported by a larger number of trucks to ensure that they reach their destination on schedule.

The proposed measure will increase transport costs, with an inflationary impact on the economy as a whole.

- In addition, the UECC emphasises that sweeping measures such as the one now proposed usually meet with but little acceptance among the drivers concerned. On the other hand, drivers tend to pay more attention to selective measures, especially those that apply to a specific time frame, and compliance is more reliable. It also remains to be seen whether a general ban is appropriate at times of low traffic (at night, for example). The UECC believes that the deployment of flexible facilities to influence traffic flows would be a better approach.
- In the UECC's opinion, general overtaking bans for trucks will not compensate for backlogs in the efforts to extend road infrastructure. The UECC calls for the swift upgrading of dual carriage ways to at least three lanes in either direction as the only possible answer.

Slight relaxation of the traffic ban for trucks in the Inn Valley

With the regulation of November 13, 2008, the government of the Austrian federal state of Tyrol has amended the sectorial traffic ban for trucks in the Inn valley. It now applies only to the section of the A12 motorway between Langkampfen and Ampass, thus leaving out the stretch

between Zirl and Ampass. The ban will be extended to cover the original area on January 1, 2011. The list of prohibited goods remains unchanged and will enter into effect as originally stipulated on January 1, 2009.

Working group "Transport"

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At its meeting on 7 November 2008 in Bolzano (Italy) the working group adopted the following resolutions:

The European Commission's proposal for an amendment by the European Parliament and the European Council of Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures, COM (2008) 436

On July 7, 2008, the European Commission put forward a package of new "Greening Transport" initiatives which include a proposal to revise the so-called "Eurovignette Directive" on road pricing. The purpose of this new regulation is to ensure that the prices charged for the use of the roads better reflect the external costs caused by the transport of goods.

Accordingly, road tolls for heavy vehicles should in future include the costs for air pollution, noise and congestion attributable to road haulage. The costs of climatic change and CO₂ emissions will not be added to this calculation, since they can be internalised more appropriately by other means.

As in the past, the directive will apply only to the road haulage sector. The individual Member States will be free to levy the additional road tolls for the external costs as described above at their own discretion.

In connection with the proposal, the UECC demands the following:

- No unilateral charge for one particular mode of transport – no unilateral charges for particular sections of one mode of transport
- The regulations should be applied in the same way throughout the European Union in order to avoid distortions of competition
- External benefits and already paid taxes and fees must be taken into account
- No attribution of congestion costs exclusively to freight traffic

- Clearly defined rules for the calculation and maximum limits for the individual cost factors
- No additional options for road toll supplements in mountain regions
- Investment of the funds into road infrastructures and the immediate reduction of negative effects.

UECC calls for the speedy upgrade of the Rhine-Rhone TGV

For the UECC this high-speed rail link is an essential component of Europe's transport infrastructure. It therefore welcomes the large amount of progress that has been made to date. In particular, it is looking forward to the opening of the first section of the Rhine-Rhone TGV between Auxon (near Dijon) and Petit Croix (near Belfort), which is planned for December 11, 2011. More efforts are however required if the rail link is to fulfill its potential: the second section between Mulhouse and Petit-Croix and a 15 km long stretch to the east of Dijon on the eastern branch of the TGV still have to be completed. And the southern and western branches have to be added as well.

The Rhine-Rhone TGV is a genuinely European project, in essence a Franco-German partnership. Optimal links with the German and French networks are therefore a must, for which Frankfurt, Stuttgart and Freiburg could be the points of departure on the German side of the border.

The operating concept is expected to be available by the end of 2009. Also within this time frame, plans for the major access routes to the German and French networks should be finalised, independently of the nature of the future operators or rolling stock (TGV, ICE or others...).

Major parts of the work to upgrade the tracks for high-speed traffic should also be finished by 2011. This is particularly important for the (Freiburg)-Müllheim-Mulhouse section, which is a key element of the Transeuropean networks (TEN) and hence designated as priority project No. 24 by the European Union.

If all these objectives are to be met within the above mentioned timetable, further agreements between the governments concerned are necessary.

The UECC therefore calls upon the German and French Governments, Deutsche Bahn AG und SCNF, i.e., the German and French Railway companies, to ensure that the Rhin-Rhone TGV, including its access

routes to Frankfurt, Stuttgart and Freiburg, is put on the agenda of one of the forthcoming Franco-German summit meetings.

All the UECC resolutions and position papers can be found on the website www.uecc.org.

New member of the Executive Committee

The Swiss national group of the UECC has elected Mr. Roland Daettler, Chamber of Commerce of Geneva, as a new member of the Committee.

He replaces Mr. Josef Küttel, who resigned at the last General Assembly in September 2008.

Truck traffic bans in the Czech Republic

The Czech government has proposed a year-round traffic ban for trucks on Fridays between 15.00 and 18.00 hrs and on Sundays between midnight and 22.00 hrs.

Transports for agricultural purposes, technical services and building sites will not be affected. The new law still has to be approved by the parliament.

Germany invests in access routes to sea ports

The German federal government has decided to invest an additional one billion euros in transport infrastructure in 2009, which will bring the total sum up to more than 10 billion euros. Access routes to sea ports shall be among the main beneficiaries.

As part of the implementation of its current directive on freight transport and logistics, the government plans to present a new national concept for the sea and river ports in the near future. It will take account of the enormous increase in cargo throughput in the ports and include aims and tasks for the companies and organisations concerned.

In addition, the European Union has announced that a German-Swedish cooperation between the ports of Sassnitz (Island of Rügen) and Trelleborg will receive funds of about 10 million euros as part of the TEN package to promote "motorways of the sea" projects. One of the cooperation's objectives is to reduce traffic congestion on the roads and encourage the use of environment friendly modes of transport such as ships and trains.

Calendar 2009

Executive Committee:

15 May 2009	France
2 October 2009	Austria

General Assembly

15 May 2009	France
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Working group:

23/24 April 2009	Bern (CH)
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