



Swiss national research programme Transport and Environment

**P o l i c y s t r a t e g i e s f o r t h e
p r o m o t i o n o f c o m b i n e d
t r a n s p o r t**

Markus Maibach, Christoph Schreyer, Matthias Lebküchner

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INFRAS

Gerechtigkeitsgasse 20, Postfach, CH-8039 Zurich, Tel. +41 1 205 95 95, Fax +41 1 205 95 99, E-Mail zuerich@infras.ch
Mühlemattstrasse 45, CH-3007 Bern, Tel. +41 31 370 19 19, Fax +41 31 370 19 10, E-Mail bern@infras.ch

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Summary

This part of the research project dealing with "multi-modal transport links" analyses the various ways of promoting combined transport media at international and national level. This subject is highly topical from a political standpoint within the context of the flanking measures taken in conjunction with the bilateral land-transport agreement between Switzerland and the EU, above all as regards Alpine transit. In view of the various link-ups which it involves, the promotion of combined transport media is more complex than other transport initiatives, as a large number of agents (railway market, road haulage market) as well as additional technical components (transshipment systems between transport media) must be taken into account. Current promotion initiatives at EU level and in various individual countries focus on providing support for the infrastructure and for pilot projects as well as on tax incentives for road transport. These promotion policies should be seen in the light of developments in railway reform, which should, particularly as the railway markets open up, lead to increased competition between the combined-transport operators and the railways.

A key role is played here by consistently promoting the competitiveness of the railways in conjunction with ensuring discrimination-free access to the network. Intensified competitive pressure releases unused productivity potentials and above all enhances the quality of the services offered. However, lower prices made possible by subsidies are indispensable to produce a significant shift of traffic onto the rails in the short term. The optimisation potentials realised by improvements in the transalpine infrastructure as well as the optimisation of the transport links will only become effective in the mid to long term. Beyond this, the fundamental precondition for a sustained shift of traffic to the rails is the internalisation of the external costs at international level as well as the consistent implementation of the social recommendations and the speed and weight limits for heavy road transport. Now that Switzerland has harmonised the competitive conditions between road and rail by introducing a heavy transport tax based on mileage, it is vital to introduce such a km-tax on a European scale too.

The improvement of the quality and performance features of combined transport media with respect to time is at least as important as the attainable cost reductions. Increased reliability is thus of central importance. A flexible policy for terminal opening times will also contribute to this end.

An optimal policy mix designed to promote combined transport media must link the core elements of the various packets together. The complexity of the transport links calls for a differentiated strategy. The timetable for a future-oriented combined transport system can consequently be outlined as follows: in the short term, existing traffic should be encouraged to use combined transport by introducing subsidies and extending price incentives for upgrading services as far as possible; in the mid term, the organisation of the transport links should be optimised so that combined transport media can compete in terms of costs, transport times and above all reliability with their competitors on the road. The same goal is pursued by extending the transalpine infrastructure as well as by taking measures for optimising combined transport transshipment methods – although not until the mid to long term. In parallel to this, the competitive conditions are being harmonised by means of price measures and rigorous deregulation of the railway sector as well as the standardised and consistent implementation of the legal stipulations relating to road freight. These measures should create the framework conditions necessary to ensure a comprehensive shift of traffic onto the railways.

In the long term therefore, it must be possible to end the subsidies for combined transport systems, not least because they will in any case lose their legitimacy in the face of the harmonised framework conditions. The extra volume of traffic this will bring will then almost certainly be in a better position to cover the significant fixed costs of the infrastructure, at least in part.