Introduction

In July 2023 the European Commission presented a package of proposals for the greening of freight transport. Greening Freight Transport is Flagship 4 of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, whereby transport emissions should be decreased by 90% by 2050.

Freight is responsible for over 30% of transport CO2 emissions and is expected to grow by around 25% in 2030 and 50% in 2050.

The revision of the Weights and Dimensions Directive focusses on three key issues: the environmental performance of road freight transport, cross-border transport within the Single Market and enforcement. In particular also the cross-border transport aspect is of interest to CPMR. The CountEmissions EU Regulation sets common rules for the accounting of greenhouse gas emissions of transport services.

The proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area aims to improve the use of rail infrastructure capacity.

The revision of the Intermodal Transport Directive is focused on making freight transport more sustainable and competitive.

The Belgian EU-Presidency, under the responsible Minister for Transport, George Gilkinet (Ecolo) aims to finalise these files under their term, with General Approaches for the upcoming June Transport Council.

Against this background CPMR is emphasizing the following statements and priorities.

1) CPMR is welcoming the Greening Freight proposals as a whole, for the purpose of further decarbonization of the transport sector as part of the European Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and the European Green Deal.

2) The implementation of the Greening Freight Package should thereby ensure increasing accessibility and connectivity of peripheral and maritime regions, in order to reduce existing distances between economic centers in the EU and beyond.

3) Special attention is thereby needed for cross-border connections between CPMR regions which need to be zero-emission and compatible in operational terms.

4) CPMR would furthermore like to draw attention for the budgetary consequences of the implementation of the Greening Freight Package for its regions and would like to see sufficient European and national funding for the necessary measures to be taken.
I. Weights and Dimensions

The CPMR:

- Welcomes this proposal which will benefit the decarbonisation of the road transport sector.
- Believes that the provision of funds for the reconversion of the sector is needed in order to adopt compensatory measures which would avoid possible imbalances that may affect the operators, such as changes in the market and supply readjustment.
- Believes that establishing an automatic authorization for the cross-border transport of heavier or longer vehicles between all neighbouring Member States, including CPMR regions, would allow for harmonizing the maximum weights and dimensions with the most common limits currently allowed and increasing the maximum weight up to 44 tons.
- However, warns that the new rules could exacerbate the situation on heavily congested sections of certain roads. The potential impact of the new rules raises concerns about worsening conditions on these particular stretches, where congestion and the inherent dangers already pose significant challenges even before the Directive is implemented.
- Expresses also its concern that the rules favour road-based options over rail, contrary to the TEN-T’s objective of promoting and prioritising sustainable and efficient transport via rail networks.

II. Count Emissions EU

The CPMR:

- Welcomes the CountEmissions EU proposal to set a common EU framework for the accounting of GHG emission in transport services as it could contribute to the decarbonisation of the transport sector. Clarity, reliability, and comparison of GHG emissions for transport operations can lead to behavioral changes and innovation towards more sustainable operations.
- Underlines, however, that specific attention should be paid to the impact the proposal might have on SMEs, especially in terms of costs and red tape. In this regard, the exemptions for SMEs from the obligation to use of primary data and of the verification system are welcomed.

III. Railway Infrastructure

The CPMR:

- Welcomes the Railway Infrastructure Capacity proposal. Believes that the proposed regulation would enhance the use of the network and improve the quality of capacity and operations, therefore allowing for more traffic to be accommodated in the network. It will increase the attractiveness of rail transport, thus contributing to the EU decarbonisation objectives as well as improving connectivity, especially at cross-border.
- Welcomes the positive impact the proposal can have on cross-border connections, the reduction of bottlenecks and on the accessibility of regions – in turn contributing to territorial cohesion and economic development.
- Underlines the pivotal role that regional authorities have in relation to transport infrastructure both for in terms of management and investments. Thus, calls for an adequate involvement of regional authorities in the development of rail services under public service obligations and recognition as key stakeholders in terms of cooperation with rail infrastructure managers.
• Welcomes the inclusion of ‘connectivity and accessibility of people and regions’ among the socio-economic criteria for the resolution of conflicting capacity needs and requests, and management of scarce capacity.

• Underlines that passenger trains should not be systematically given priority over freight trains in the allocation of train paths, as this is detrimental to the competitiveness of rail freight compared with road transport, and therefore to modal shift.

• Believes that additional work is needed on many other elements that can help to further increasing transport and train capacity, including in CPMR regions and on automatic train operations, such as: train path grouping, speed harmonisation, integrated regular timetables, efficient passenger transition, use of longer trains, use of reciprocal trading conditions for capacity-friendly behaviour (both infrastructure managers and applicants), deployment of the harmonised European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) across Europe and automatic train operation.

• Points to the need for accelerating the provision of missing links to enable the implementation of new freight corridors in those cross-border territories, including CPMR regions, where there is the potential to attract traffic.

• Underlines that space needs to be created for additional services, in order to improve the performance of rail and reduce costs for infrastructure managers and railway undertakings.

IV. Intermodal transport

The CPMR:

• Regards this legislative proposal essential for achieving a sustainable and efficient multimodal and combined transport system and highlights the role of regions in co-financing the renovation of rail freight lines, the creation and modernisation of terminal installations and multimodal terminals.

• Urges Member States to establish sufficient economic support schemes for the implementation of relevant measures in this proposal.

• Stresses that measures to reduce the competitiveness gap between combined transport and road transport must include support for operations and transhipment costs for combined transport operators.

• Calls upon Member States to carry out a coordinated evaluation in close cooperation with CPMR regions to analyse the aspect of intermodal terminals.

• Emphasises that the European Commission must ensure that the new directive on combined transport is consistent with the future rules set out in the revised guidelines on state aid to railway undertakings.

• Underlines that the funds allocated to multimodal terminals in the next Connecting Europe Facility after 2027 must be increased.

• Points out that the development of regions with logistics platforms, as well as the development of new logistics platforms should be promoted.
The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) represents more than 150 regional authorities from 24 countries across Europe and beyond. Organised in Geographical Commissions, the CPMR works to ensure that a balanced territorial development is at the heart of the European Union and its policies.

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