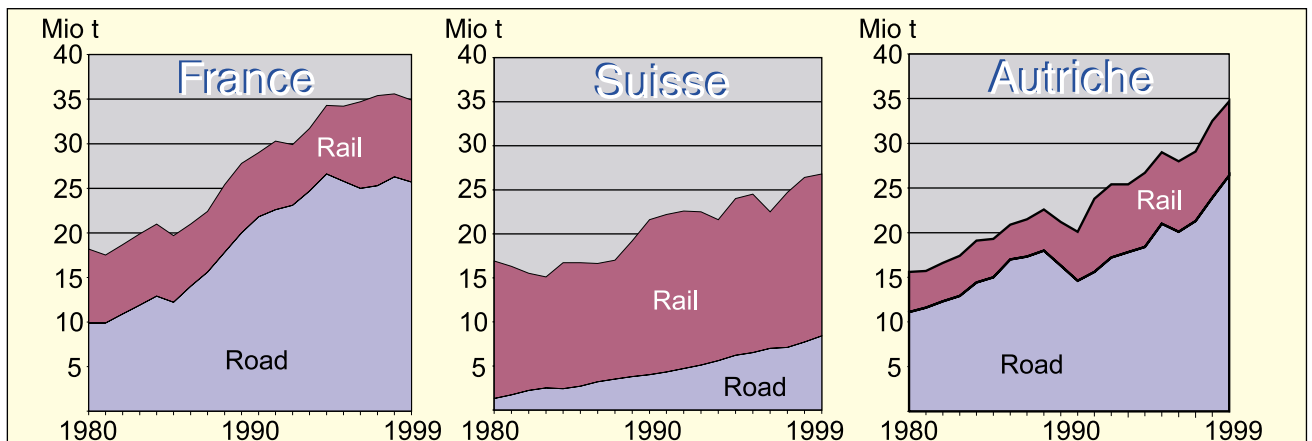


BRINGING TRANS-ALPINE FREIGHT POLICY ON RAILTRACK

three countries – one problem – one common policy required

Transalpine goods transport has doubled since 1980.

More and more goods are transported on roads through the Alps. Road freight has nearly tripled from about 22 Mio tons in 1980 to over 60 Million tons in 1999. The road's share of the freight market also increased from 44 % to 63 % over the same period. The impacts of transport on the environment and human health are particularly strong in the narrow alpine valleys. Shifting freight from road to rail and stopping the increase of transalpine goods transport is a must to protect these sensitive areas from the existing negative impacts. A comparison of the main alpine crossings in Austria, France and Switzerland shows how the different countries are tackling this challenge.



Volume 1999: 34.9 Million tons;
road 73 %, rail 27 %

Volume 1999: 26.8 Million tons;
road 31 %, rail 69 %

Volume 1999: 34.7 Million tons;
road 76 %, rail 24 %

Since March 1999 the **Mt. Blanc road tunnel has been closed** due to a severe accident caused by a truck. Most of the traffic is **diverted to the Fréjus road link**, which is used by **up to 7000 lorries a day**. In contrast, the traffic on the parallel **Mt. Cenis rail link has not increased** although this link has free capacity. The **closing of Mt. Blanc did not reduce** the total amount of trucks crossing the French Alps.

Mt. Blanc tunnel is scheduled to be **reopened at the end of 2001**. In the short term, a **piggyback service** should move trucks to the rail and a **new rail link** is to be built between **Lyon and Turin** by 2015 to increase rail capacity.

In 1980 the **Gotthard motorway** was opened, which caused a considerable **shift from rail to road**. The rail share is still comparably high because of the **weight limit** and the **night and week-end bans** for trucks. Since 1 January 2001, the **weight limit has been increased from 28 to 34 tons** and a **distance related heavy vehicle fee** is now levied. The trucks are blocked on the Gotthard motorway, as the amount of trucks is too high. In June 2001, a **piggyback** service starts and two **rail tunnels** are to be built till 2006 and 2012 to **reduce the number of trucks** crossing the Swiss Alps on the road **from 1.4 Million to 650'000** per year. In 2005, the weight limit will **be increased to 40 tons**.

Road traffic on the Brenner link **has grown heavily** in spite of the toll and ecopoint system for trucks. The toll was considered by the European Court to be **discriminating and violating European law**. As a result, Austria was asked to change the toll. The **ecopoints** were agreed for a transitory period as part of the accession treaty between Austria and the EU to **limit the emissions** from transit traffic and limit the increase of trucks. In the long term a **new Brenner rail link** is to increase rail capacity, although even the existing link is by far not saturated yet.

What can be learnt from the current situation

The existing national policies are not co-ordinated between the Alpine countries and thus do not have the overall positive effects but only corridor effects which makes the situation even worse in other areas.

The existing policy to shift trans-alpine goods transport to railways is inconsistent and thus not strong enough. Particularly, the European Union does not follow a consistent policy to protect sensitive areas such as the Alps from transport (e.g. according to the proposal of the European Commission the new ecopoint solution should no longer contain the 108 % clause to limit road traffic). Yet the protection of sensitive areas is a requirement of the transport protocol of the Alpine convention.

The capacity of transport infrastructure (road and rail) is in general not a limiting factor. The capacity of the existing rail infrastructure in the Alps is high enough to shift a considerable amount of freight to the railways already now.

THE POLICY WE NEED

The protection of sensitive areas (Alps, Pyrenees,...) from freight transport is a Community objective. The transport policy of the whole Union should be consistently be oriented to achieve this objective.

The number of trucks crossing these sensitive areas must be limited for the whole alpine region. The common policy has to define non-discriminating market mechanisms to allocate this quota and to develop incentives to use alternative modes (railways or short sea shipping around the Iberian peninsula).

The **existing capacity** of transport infrastructure through the Alps **should be optimised**. No new road infrastructure should be built through sensitive areas. Priority must be put on the better use of the existing rail infrastructure. The **Mt. Blanc tunnel must not be re-opened** for trucks; and instead the **rail services** on the Mt. Cenis link, where capacities are available, must be improved and the rail

link on the south coast of lake of Geneva re-opened (Tonkin-line). **Railways must offer high quality services** in trans-alpine transport



reducing border-stoppage time and increasing productivity by the use of interoperable technology to meet their clients' requirements. This is a condition for the use of the existing rail infrastructure through the Alps and in Europe optimally.

European policy has to create **incentives to use railways** not only for the alpine crossing but **from the origin to the destination**. Such incentives are given by **kilometre charges for trucks**, which

must be applied all over Europe on all roads not on motorways only to cover external costs and a densely developed **combined transport network**. The existing tendency to promote piggyback is not a solution for the future. Putting whole trucks on rail is neither economically nor environmentally reasonable and is necessary only as long as no better solution exists.

The population along the Alpine transit routes must be given strong protection. Strong **night and week-end bans** are thus needed just as much as high **safety equipment standards** for trucks crossing the Alps (e.g. fire protection equipment).



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T&E is Europe's primary non-governmental organisation campaigning on a European level for an environmentally responsible approach to transport. T&E is the umbrella organisation of 37 member organisations covering 20 European countries working in this field.

T&E

Bd. de Waterloo 34 • B-1000 Brussels • Belgium
T: +32 2 502 99 09 • F: +32 2 502 99 08
E-mail: info@t-e.nu • Homepage: www.t-e.nu

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