

**FOURTH UNECE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*GENEVA, 1-2 December 2009*

**Agenda item 5. Transport**

Intervention by Switzerland<sup>1</sup>

I think we all agree that the challenge of sustainable transport lies in meeting the mobility needs of our countries providing appropriate access to all areas, while reducing the associated harmful effects on humans and the environment.

In recent decades there has been an overall improvement in the energy efficiency of transport in Switzerland. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain such as for example:

- Overall energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions caused by traffic.
- Traffic volumes continue to rise in step with gross domestic product, while freight traffic is growing even faster.
- Growth in the traffic volume gives rise to increased congestion on the most highly frequented part of the infrastructure, especially in the major agglomerations.
- There has also been little change to the distribution between non motorised transport, individual motorised transport, and public transport.

Let me briefly mention one particular experiences and some of the measures that were taken in order to address the challenge of transalpine traffic. The second key note speaker was referring to the need for creating business incentives for making the shift to more sustainable transport modes happen and this is exactly what we haven been trying to do.

For Switzerland, the rapidly expanding transalpine road freight traffic has posed a particular challenge. This leads to traffic congestion at vulnerable points of Switzerland's road network and has harmful effects on people and the environment alike. Switzerland has therefore persistently advocated that the growing volume of transalpine traffic should be processed in the most environmentally sound way, which is primarily by rail.

In order to bring about the targeted shift of transalpine freight and passenger traffic from the roads to the railways and to better integrate the external costs of the transalpine traffic, primarily economic instruments have been used: In particular, a heavy vehicle fee was introduced in 2001, which is levied on trucks. The fee resulted in a decrease traffic across the Alps on the one hand, and the preservation of a high level of rail traffic on the other hand.

But not only economic incentives were created in order to achieve the shift from roads to railways: Also significant investments were undertaken to in order to ensure the maintenance, modernisation and expansion of the railway infrastructure.

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<sup>1</sup> The text is presented as received from the author.

In order to encourage more and more companies to shift their freight transport from road to rail, further action needs to be taken in parallel with existing schemes such as the heavy vehicle fee, subsidies for combined traffic, motorail services and the deregulation of rail freight traffic.

What seems crucial for the success of such policies and measures is that they are part of coordinated approaches and policies at the subregional level, at the regional or even at the global level. And we are hoping that meetings such as this and the CSD 18/19 will further facilitate this."

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