

**Central and Eastern European countries debate on promotion of  
the Freight Village concept and Combined Transport**

A Workshop on the introduction of the Freight Villages (FVs) concept and development of activity of combined transport (CT) operators in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) was organized jointly by UNECE Trans European Railway (TER) Project with UIRR (Brussels) and Kombiverkehr (Germany). The workshop took place on 18-19 July 2002 in Munich, Germany.

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce in CEEC the concept of FVs developed in most Western European countries, offering extremely useful services by responding accurately to existing transport related needs and market evolutions as well as to promote actions for an extended and permanent co-operation among different transport players in the field of freight and combined transport activity.

The workshop brought together speakers and participants from 10 TER member countries as well as international organizations and combined transport operators, efficiently operational at European level among which the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Eurochambres) and the European Network of Freight Villages (Europlatforms).

The issues debated included: FVs and their main components -intermodal terminals - as indispensable infrastructure fabrics that should be in place in order for the combined transport to be operational and to develop further; the activity of FVs as multi-firm commercial estates concentrating different transport activities from different transport operators and users offering new options for the development of advanced systems of efficient management of sustainable freight flows; the benefits from sharing of the same transport facilities and equipment in one and the same place by more users, as a way to decrease the overall transport cost while offering a higher quality of transport services; the measures for supporting the activity of CT and the need for elaboration of an adequate legislation to be implemented in the TER countries; the implementation of the objectives provided by EU Directive 2002/16 on Interoperability; the necessity of concluding concrete intergovernmental agreements for facilitating the transit transport both for passenger and freight in international traffic, etc.

The initiative of UNECE, TER, TEM, Eurochambres, Europlatforms, to join their efforts and, in co-operation with EC DG REGIO – ISPA and DG TREN, to embark upon an integrated promotion of the FVs concept in the 10ISPA countries and their CEE neighbours by organizing meetings for the transfer of know-how and sharing of experiences from the West was strongly supported by the participants.

The need for a competitive railway environment, creating a context in which the client will ultimately have the possibility to choose his traction supplier(s) was outlined and the bi- or multimodal co-operation among railway companies in various fields may contribute to a more efficient railway activity in general and provide better results and profits for the sector.

