



# The Association of European Vehicle Logistics

## Press Release

### **Railway's Study on Mega Trucks is "Not Realistic"**

BRUSSELS – 2, August 2007 – Frits Mehrtens, the President of ECG, The Association of European Vehicle Logistics, has labelled as “not realistic” the content of the study ‘Mega Trucks versus Rail Freight?’ presented last week in Brussels by six associations of rail operators.

“That study distorts the reality – said Mr Mehrtens - as it suggests that the adoption of the so called Ecocombies, or Mega Trucks, would nearly be a criminal gesture. It’s a shame that when talking about trucks whose maximum length is 25.25 metres, the study includes pictures of trucks longer than 50 metres, that are used in Australia and whose introduction in Europe has never been on any agenda”.

“ECG has nothing against rail freight transport, on the contrary – he added -. In fact ECG members do operate more than 16,000 rail wagons, but the “Mega Trucks versus Rail Freight study?” does manipulate the facts”. Ecocombies, or “Monster Trucks” as they are labelled in the study whose aim is to lobby the European Commission, are 25.25 metres long and are commonly used in Sweden and Finland. Their introduction is being considered in Germany, they are being tested in the Netherlands.

The study suggests that the adoption of Ecocombies would result in a modal shift, worsening road congestion. It also maintains that heavier trucks would imply a higher use of the infrastructures and therefore the need of higher infrastructure investments. Also the level of safety on the roads would worsen, according to the study.

“None of these statements are true nor can be proven - explained Mr Mehrtens - Let’s see why:

**Congestion and Modal Shift:** Ecocombies will not have any effect on road congestion nor will they imply any modal shift. In fact everywhere in Europe the real problem is the dramatic shortage of truck drivers. Number of drivers is on a constant decrease and recently, this shortage has been worsened by the adoption of the European Working Time Directive. There could not be any modal shift to the detriment of the rail because there are not enough drivers even to drive the existing number of trucks. If Ecocombies are introduced, there will not be more trucks on the roads, rather on the contrary. Furthermore, their introduction would just help to maintain the existing level of freight transported by road. This is a necessity in order to avoid a slowdown of the European Economy.

**Investments in infrastructures:** Tests carried out in many countries show that Ecocombies have not got any negative impact on the roads. Despite a higher payload, Ecocombies are equipped with more axles and therefore their weight per axle is equal or even minor to that of normal trucks. It has to be underlined that in most cases, where the size of goods prevails over the weight, including the automotive industry – fully loaded Ecocombies would not even reach the maximum weight of the trucks currently in use. Ecocombies don’t damage infrastructure.

**Road Safety:** Where the 25.25 metres long trucks are used, the number of road incidents, where long trucks are involved, is not higher than in countries where the maximum length of trucks is 18.75 metres. Additional, specific training for drivers of Ecocombies can be introduced, as it is the case in the Netherlands.

**Environment:** The introduction of Ecocombies would cut the consumption of fuel and therefore reduce the level of CO2 emission. Their use would support the European Union’s effort to achieve the CO2 emission target.

“Let’s be clear on this – concluded Mr Mehrtens -: ECG would like to see more freight moved onto the railways. On the other hand, it’s impossible to ignore the capacity problems the European railway network suffers from: like it or not, in the foreseeable future the rail will not be the backbone of European freight transport. And it should be clear to everybody that no single mode of transport can solve the transport problems of Europe”.

#### **Background for the Editors**

Established in 1997, ECG represents more than 2/3rds of the European Finished Vehicles Logistics industry. ECG Members operate in the field of outbound logistics for the Automotive sector, including quality control at the end of the assembly line, storage in special compounds, transport in all modalities – rail, road and sea – de-waxing Pre-Delivery Inspections (PDI), customising, workshop activities and the refurbishing of former fleet vehicles. **ECG has 87 members** from 24 countries, which last year recorded an aggregated turnover in excess of 12 billion Euros. Members handle about 40 million cars per year with over **53,000 direct employees**. In terms of equipment, the ECG

members operate **18,000 trucks, 16,000 rail wagons, about 230 ships; 28 river barges; 450 compounds; 110 port terminals; more than 64 million square metres of Car parks; about one million square metres of workshops.**

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