

## 【欧州】【Common】

# The question of environmental friendly road transport between China and Europe in the light of first successful TIR transport to Chinese Belt and Road port Khorgos from Europe to China

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### 【概要 : Summary】

The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative has the aim to link China with countries in Europe and Asia, and also with the Gulf States, the Middle East and Africa in order to increase the trade between these regions and China, to the benefit of the Chinese economy. In November 2018, a first successful TIR truck journey by road from China to Europe was made, starting in the dry port Khorgos at the Kazakh-Chinese border. The journey ended in Poland after 13 days. This was followed by the first successful TIR transport from Europe to China in February 2019, confirming the viability of the new freight transport connection by road between Europe and China. With the successful opening of the TIR freight transport connection between China and Europe, via Khorgos dry port, it is expected that the freight transport and trade on the China-Europe-China road corridor will significantly increase. It will also further increase the importance of Khorgos, which plans to become the world biggest dry port and free-trade zone, as well as a gateway for road freight transport between Europe and China. The main advantage of using the freight transport connection by trucks is seen in time and cost savings, compared to rail and air. The road transport between China and Europe under the TIR system is expected to become fully operational with reduced door-to-door costs and delivery times. In this respect, the road transport is highly competitive compared to other modes of transport,

including rail. Compared to rail transport, road transport is several days quicker but less expensive than air transport. Due to the time advantage, truck transport is expected to highly increase in the next years. However, this advantage will probably come at higher environmental costs. Although the Khorgos dry port mainly connects Kazakhstan to China by rail, the new transport by road can be expected to emit more CO2 and other emissions than the transport by rail. The railways have the disadvantage of different railway gauges on the route between China and Europe. While China and Europe use standard gauge, the railway tracks in Russia and in former Soviet countries use wide gauge. Freight transport by railway therefore includes the changes of trains on the route between China and Europe due to the gauge differences existing in Russia and former Soviet countries. In order to stay competitive with the TIR freight transport by trucks between China and Europe in future, the railway companies should consider the possibility to develop and introduce gauge change trains (GCT trains) for freight transport on the China-Europe railway routes, in order to save time and increase competitiveness.

### 【記事 : Article】

Under the Chinese “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI), or “One Belt One Road” (Chinese: 一带一路) or the “Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road” (丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝

绸之路), the Chinese government started a new trade strategy in 2013. It involves infrastructure development and investments in more than 60 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa, with the aim to facilitate the trade between China and these countries, to the benefit of the Chinese economy. The “belt” refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt, including rail and motorway routes across the Eurasian continent from eastern China to Scandinavia. The New Eurasian Land Bridge runs from Western China to Western Russia through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, towards Poland and Germany. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road refers to a shipping lane that is planned to connect Quanzhou in China to Venice in Italy, with prospective stops along the way in Malaysia, Ethiopia, and Egypt. Since 2014, Khorgos is the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative and connects Kazakhstan and China, with a dry port for road and railway connection. In September 2018, Kazakhstan and China opened the new border crossing at Khorgos dry port to increase the cross-border Eurasian trade along the new Western China to Western Europe 8,445 km expressway, joining Western China to Western Europe.

In November 2018, the first successful TIR journey by road from China to Europe was made, starting in Khorgos at the Kazakh-Chinese border. The journey ended in Poland after 13 days. This was followed by the first successful TIR transport from Europe to China in February 2019. The new Europe-China TIR freight transport represents an opportunity in road transport for delivering goods between Europe and China by truck.

The exchange of goods by road between Europe and China is enabled under the Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), a multilateral treaty with 76 parties concluded on 14 November 1975, which simplifies and harmonises the administrative formalities of international road transport. Under the Convention, TIR operations establish an international customs transit system with maximum facility to move goods in sealed vehicles or containers from a customs office in the departure country to a customs office in the

destination country. It does not require extensive and time-consuming border checks at intermediate borders. The TIR system is not limited to road transport and it also allows a combination with other modes of transport such as rail or maritime transport, as long as at least one part of the total transport is made by road.

The two pilot journeys by truck between Europe and China have proven that the road freight transport connection works in both directions. The recent first Europe-China TIR transport is a joint effort between International Road Transport Union (IRU) and global leading logistics companies, including CEVA Logistics, Shanghai Jet-rail International Transportation, and Alblas International Logistics (Netherlands) as the operator. According to the IRU Secretary General Umberto de Pretto, this new road connection between Europe and China will be a game changer for cross border transport in China. The first TIR transport has also shown that the system is highly competitive in terms of cost and time relative to other modes of transport like railways on similar routes. The road connection is expected to boost trade mainly between China and Europe, but could also benefit the countries along the Belt & Road route based on international road transport. During 2019, it is expected that regular operations on this route will be established. It is estimated that the China-Europe freight trade by road under the TIR system could save transport companies up to 50% on door-to-door costs compared to air, and around ten days delivery time compared with rail.

However, in a comment on the road transport connections for freight between Europe and China, rail operators warned that an increase in freight transport on roads would also lead to a further increase of the total CO2 emissions. On the other hand, the transport by the TIR system has the advantage of being some days quicker than railway freight transport, mainly due to the railway's disadvantage of the different gauges in Europe and China on the one hand and Russia and those countries that are former members of the Soviet bloc, like

Kazakhstan on the other. While in the EU and in China the standard railway gauge of 1,435mm is used, Russia and the former Soviet bloc countries use Russia's wider gauge, which means whenever cargo crosses in or out of China it needs transferring to different wagons. The same laborious process needs to be followed at the borders with European countries for trains entering Europe. Therefore, road transport between the EU and China has a time advantage due to this delay in railway transport, caused by different gauges. On the other hand, road transport has the disadvantage of increasing pollution and GHG emissions. Therefore, in order to speed up the transport of goods by rail between China and Europe and to remain competitive in comparison to trucks in future, railway operators should consider the possibility of introducing gauge-changing trains, a technology that has been developed in Japan for high-speed trains.

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