

**EUROPEAN CONFERENCE  
OF MINISTERS OF  
TRANSPORT**



**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION  
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STATISTICAL DIVISION**



**EUROPEAN UNION  
EUROSTAT**



## **GLOSSARY FOR TRANSPORT STATISTICS**

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## **INTERMODAL TRANSPORT**

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### I. Introduction

#### 01. Intermodal transport

Movement of goods (in one and the same loading unit or a vehicle) by successive modes of transport without handling of the goods themselves when changing modes.

*Vehicle can be a road or rail vehicle or a vessel.*

*The return movement of empty containers/swap bodies and empty goods road vehicles/trailers are not themselves part of intermodal transport since no goods are being moved. Such movements are associated with intermodal transport and it is desirable that data on empty movements be collected together with data on intermodal transport.*

#### *Multimodal Transport*

*\*European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) defines multimodal transport as the "carriage of goods by at least two different modes of transport". Intermodal transport is therefore a particular type of multimodal transport.*

*\*United Nations Convention on International Multimodal Transport of Goods defines international multimodal transport as "the carriage of goods by at least two different modes of transport on the basis of a multimodal transport contract from a place in one country at which the goods are taken in charge by the multimodal transport operator to a place designated for delivery in a different country;"*

#### *Combined Transport*

*\*UN/ECE used the term combined transport as being identical to the definition for intermodal transport described above, but recently has taken account of the ECMT-definition for combined transport given below.*

*\*According to the rules of application of the ECE/FAL Recommendation No.19 "Code for Modes of Transport" the definition is: "Combined transport: Combination of means of transport where one (passive) transport means is carried by another (active) means which provides traction and consumes energy";*

*\*For transport policy purposes the ECMT restricts the term combined transport to cover: "Intermodal transport where the major part of the European journey is by rail, inland waterways or sea and any initial and/or final leg carried out by road are as short as possible".*

#### 02. (Active mode)/(Passive mode) transport

Transport of goods using two modes of transport in combination, where one (passive) transport means is carried on another (active) transport means which provides traction and consumes energy (rail/road transport, sea/road transport, sea/rail transport...).

*Piggy-back transport is the synonym for rail/road transport.*

#### 03. Active mode/Road accompanied transport

Transport of a complete goods road motor vehicle, accompanied by the driver, by another mode of transport (for example by sea or rail).

**04. Active mode/Road unaccompanied transport**

Transport of goods road motor vehicles or trailers, not accompanied by the driver, by another mode of transport (for example by sea or rail).

**05. Transport of containers or swap bodies (by active mode)**

Carriage of containers or swap bodies by an active mode of transport.

**II. EQUIPMENT****01. Loading unit**

Container, swap body.

*“Flats”, which are used in maritime transport, should be considered to be a special type of container and are therefore included here.*

**02. Intermodal transport unit (ITU)**

Container, swap body or semi-trailer/goods road motor vehicle suitable for intermodal transport.

**03. Container**

Special box to carry freight, strengthened and stackable and allowing horizontal or vertical transfers.

The technical definition of the container is: “Article of transport equipment which is:

- a) of a permanent character and accordingly strong enough to be suitable for repeated use;
- b) specially designed to facilitate the carriage of goods, by one or more mode of transport, without intermediate reloading;
- c) fitted with devices permitting its ready handling, particularly its transfer from one mode of transport to another;
- d) so designed as to be easy to fill and empty;
- e) stackable; and,
- f) having an internal volume of 1 m<sup>3</sup> or more.”

*Swap bodies are excluded.*

*Although without internal volume, and therefore not satisfying criterion (f) above, flats used in maritime transport should be considered to be a special type of container and therefore are included here*

**04. Sizes of containers**

The main sizes of containers are:

- a) **20 Foot ISO container** (length of 20 feet and width of 8 feet);
- b) **40 Foot ISO container** (length of 40 feet and width of 8 feet);
- c) **Super high cube container** (Oversize container); and
- d) **Air container** (Container conforming to standards laid down for air transportation).

*Containers sizes classified under a) to c) are referred to as large containers.*

**05. Types of containers**

The main types of containers, as defined by ISO Standards Handbook on Freight Containers are:

1. General purpose containers;
2. Specific purpose containers.
  - closed ventilated container;
  - open top container;
  - platform based container open sided;
  - platform based container open sided with complete superstructure;
  - platform based container open sided with incomplete superstructure and fixed ends;
  - platform based container open sided with incomplete superstructure and folding ends;
  - platform (container);
3. Specific cargo containers;
  - thermal container;
  - insulated container;
  - refrigerated container - (expendable refrigerant);
  - mechanically refrigerated container;
  - heated container;
  - refrigerated and heated container;
  - tank container;
  - dry bulk container;
  - named cargo container (such as automobile, livestock and others); and,
  - air mode container.

**06. TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit)**

Standard unit for counting containers of various capacities and for describing the capacities of container ships or terminals. One 20 Foot ISO container equals 1 TEU.

*One 40 Foot ISO container equals two TEU.*

**07. Swap body**

Carrying unit strong enough for repeated use, but not enough to be top-lifted or stackable when loaded, designed for intermodal transport of which one leg is road.

**08. Flat**

A loadable platform having no superstructure whatever but having the same length and width as the base of a container and equipped with top and bottom corner fittings.

*This is an alternative term used for certain types of specific purpose containers - namely platform containers and platform-based containers with incomplete structures.*

**09. Pallet**

Raised platform, intended to facilitate the lifting and stacking of goods.

*Pallets are usually made of wood, and of standard dimensions:  
1000mm X 1200mm (ISO) and 800mm X 1200mm (CEN).*

**10. Wagon for intermodal transport**

Wagon specially built or equipped for the transport of intermodal transport units (ITUs) or other goods road vehicles.

**11. Ro-Ro unit**

Wheeled equipment for carrying goods, such as a lorry, trailer or semi-trailer, which can be driven or towed onto a vessel or train.

*Port or vessels' trailers are included in this definition.*