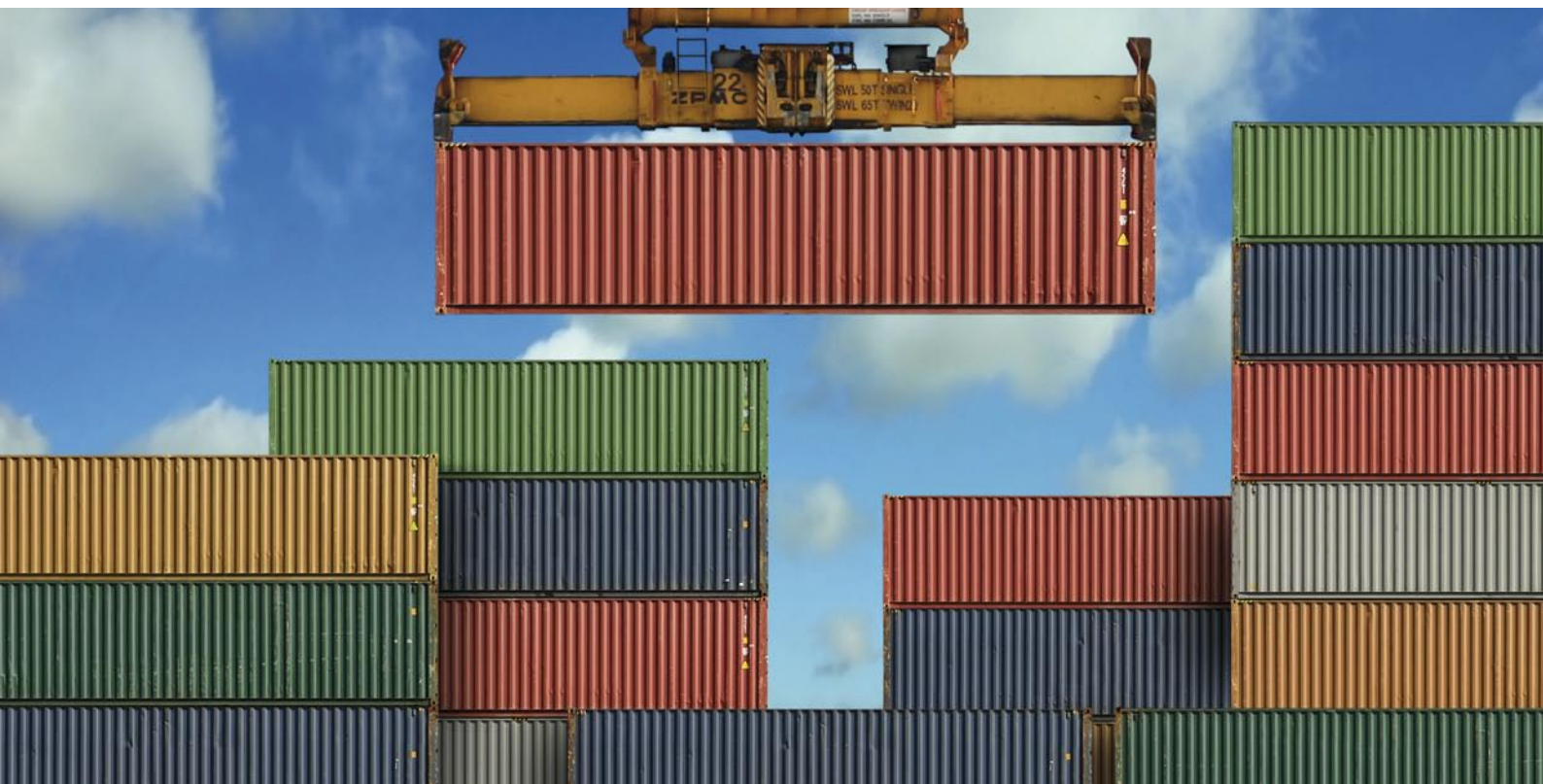




iniziativa
da las alps

Freight Traffic Institute: Research Institute for a Transport-Efficient Economy



Freight traffic is increasing unrelentingly. This is having a severe impact on the villages, towns and valleys along freight transit routes. But some of this freight traffic is avoidable, as is indicated by the differences in the transport intensity of different national economies. However, we know very little about what conditions help to reduce traffic. We urgently need to know more.

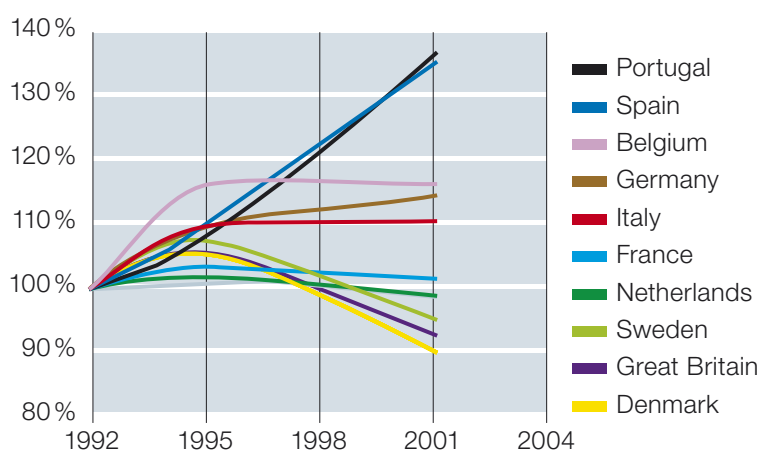


The Alpine Initiative wants to found an international Research Institute for a Transport-Efficient Economy. The institute would be part of the Educatis Internet University in Aldorf. It would establish a scientific basis for reducing freight traffic, make this available to the public and train experts to implement its research results. The project is supported by the canton of Uri, its principal town of Aldorf and a diverse committee.

A never-ending avalanche of traffic. Freight forecasts only talk about growth. Freight traffic has a severe impact on the villages, towns and valleys along road and rail routes. Measures such as noise barriers, speed limits, etc. only have a limited effect, and are not effective or implementable everywhere. The areas concerned become less attractive and the population is more at risk, and only in a few cases does improved accessibility compensate for these negative effects. Upgrades to the transport infrastructure are increasingly coming up against physical limits and the limits of acceptance. This also applies to aviation and shipping.

Transport and economic growth have to be decoupled. It really is possible to influence the growth of freight traffic. This is indicated by the differences in the transport intensity of different countries (see graph). Moreover, economic growth doesn't automatically entail a growth in transport. In some countries transport is growing much faster than the economy, whereas in other countries the opposite can be seen. Nobody knows exactly why. Although transferring freight from road to rail can alleviate the problem in the short term, the long-term effect is limited.

Transport intensity trends in selected countries since 1992, in tonne kilometres per 1,000 euros of GDP (DG TREN, Transport in Figures, 2004 and 2005; Eurostat 2005)





Wrong signals provide the wrong incentives. External costs of freight traffic that are not formally accounted for, such as environmental, health, accident and congestion costs, are not the only monetary incentives that favour a growth in traffic levels. Depending on the transport mode, varying amounts of taxpayers' money are being spent on transport infrastructure construction, which is making transport cheaper. Export subsidies are making markets more remote. Insufficient controls on existing legislation relating to road safety as well as environmental and social aspects primarily favour road freight transport. Regulatory measures such as designations of origin can also lead to "absurd transport". The most famous example of this is the legendary pigs that are transported to Parma for the sole purpose of being slaughtered there – to produce Parma ham. Neither consumers nor producers have enough information to base their purchasing or sales decisions on the "transport burden" of individual products. At present, there is virtually no systematic knowledge about what causes freight traffic to increase.

We need new scientific foundations. Some freight traffic is avoidable. However, we know very little about what conditions help to reduce traffic. Our knowledge is limited to a few examples of "absurd transport", such as Swiss cream that is transported to Belgium or central Italy to be packaged there and then sent back to Switzerland via the same route. This is why we need a research institute that closes the gaps in our knowledge. So far, not a single research institute in Europe has looked at this problem in detail. We urgently need better data to estimate how much freight traffic is avoidable. We also need to develop criteria that enable us to define and classify avoidable freight traffic. We need to establish an extensive overview of national and European regulations and subsidies that promote increas-

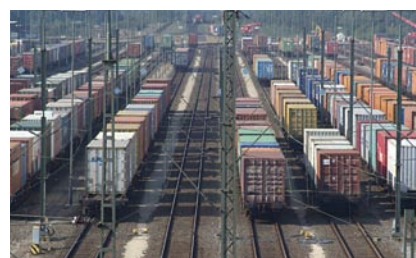
There is not a single research institute in Europe that is dedicated to the reasons for the growth in freight transport. The aim of the freight traffic research institute is to close this gap.

es in traffic. We must also identify new, transport-saving ways of producing and marketing goods. Existing knowledge must be made available systematically. This basis would then be used to develop financial, communicative and legislative instruments that would help to reduce transport. We need to research how these instruments would work and how they could be implemented. We would also have to train experts to carry out this implementation process.

Research Institute for a Transport-Efficient Economy. This is why the Alpine Initiative wants to found the Research Institute for a Transport-Efficient Economy, which will be integrated into the Educatis University in Altdorf (www.educatis.org). A research team will draw up the principles for reducing freight transport, make them available to the public, and train experts. The project will be based on a scientific policy document by Dr. Markus Liechti (Olten/Brussels 2006) and the Freight Traffic Institute preliminary project (Altdorf, 12 January 2008). The aim is for the institute to finance itself after nine years of decreasing external funding, with the help of research and teaching contracts (see table to the left). It will be opened in 2010/2011, once funds have been raised, under the leadership of a governing body that is still to be set up. The institute will also collaborate with international partners.

Freight Traffic Institute financial planning

Budget in euros	Total	Internal funding	External funding
2011–2013	1.2 million	–	1.2 million
2014–2016	1.2 million	0.4 million	0.8 million
2017–2019	1.2 million	0.8 million	0.4 million
Total	3.6 million	1.2 million	2.4 million



Prof. Konstantin Theile, President of the Educatis University: “The freight traffic institute fits into our university perfectly, since we focus on sustainability in all fields”.



Isidor Baumann, Member of the governing council of the canton of Uri: “Uri is a transit canton and not only wants to get to grips with transport, but also actively benefit from it. Following on from the HGV centre, the Alp Transit visitor centre and the SBB Historic depot, the planned institute is another element in a transport cluster. This is why the government of Uri whole-heartedly welcomes it.”



Barbara Bär, Mayor of Altdorf: “The institute could create expertise in Altdorf that would gain international recognition. We’re not aware of any other institutes that are working on this task. This is why we’re supporting the project.”



Fabio Pedrina, Member of the Swiss Parliament, President of the Alpine Initiative: “If we don’t tackle the problem at its roots and manage to get transport growth under control, even the policy of transferring traffic from road to rail, which we have initiated and actively support, will be of limited benefit.”

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The project to establish a Research Institute for a Transport-Efficient Economy has already received positive feedback. The innovative Educatis Internet University, which is based in Altdorf and is active worldwide, wants to incorporate the institute. The canton of Uri and the municipality of Altdorf are supporting the project. The Paul Schiller Foundation, the Hamasil Foundation and the Karl Mayer Foundation are financing the preparatory work.

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