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New challenges to logistics: the support of the circular economy

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Professor Dr Rob E.C.M. van der Heijden graduated in 1981 in Building and Architecture at the Eindhoven University of Technology, specialisation Urban and Regional Planning. In 1986 he received his PhD based in Eindhoven on a dissertation on the regional planning of retail facilities. From 1987 until 1993 he worked as (senior) lecturer in infrastructure planning and policy analysis at the Faculty of Civil Engineering at the Delft University of Technology. In 1994 he became full professor in Transport Policy and Logistics' Organisation of the faculty of Systems Engineering and Policy Analysis. End 2001 he became full time professor in Spatial Planning at the Nijmegen School of Management, Nijmegen University. He was appointed as Dean of this faculty early 2011.

Rob van der Heijden has been responsible for a substantial contribution to academic education programs at BA and MA level and post academic teaching. His research is focussed on transport and infrastructure issues, in particular logistics, spatial developments, intelligent transport systems and transport safety. He supervised doctoral candidates in these fields and published in international journals.

Rob van der Heijden is actively involved in several advisory boards. He is involved in the management of the research school Transport, Infrastructure and Logistics (TRAIL); acts as reviewer for scientific research programs and journals; was member of the National Transport Safety Board, and member of the managing board of the Transport Department of the Royal Institute for Engineers (KIVI). He was member of a series of environmental impact assessment committees on various infrastructure projects in the Netherlands, member of the Safety committee of the High Speed Line South. He is member of the Dutch Advisory Committee on Logistics 2040, Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure, The Hague.

New challenges to logistics: the support of the circular economy

End 2011 the Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure installed an advisory committee to advise the Dutch government on the long term future developments in the field of logistics. In the beginning of October 2013 the resulting report will be presented to the Dutch Minister of Transport. The presentation in Athens is inspired by the findings of this report.

The world is changing considerably: the global population is growing and becoming wealthier, the relationship between regional economic markets change considerably, consumption is increasing and so is the amount of waste generated. However, material and human resources, energy and good conditions for live are becoming scarcer. In answer to these developments, the need for a more sustainable development is increasingly stressed. Today, this is translated into the notion of a circular economy: an economy in which products no longer end up as waste, but are reused in the chain for as long as possible. For companies in all sectors, it is becoming more attractive to adopt business models in which they remain responsible for their products throughout their entire lifecycles. The transition to the circular economy presents new opportunities to the logistics sector. The transition to the circular economy has implications for logistics flows at global, national and local levels.

These implications will be discussed in mainlines. Issues of nearsourcing, recycling and lifecycle logistics will be addressed and illustrated by examples from practice. They illustrate that logistics should significantly contribute to adding value to production–consumption chains and networks; the often in the public debate experienced framing of logistics as a service for transporting goods from A to B is too narrow. A major issue rising from this perspective concerns the question what business models can support this transition. Therefore, some principles, deduced from the core principle of multiple value creation, and examples of new business models for circular economy services, will also be discussed.