

Press announcement



UIP ADDRESSES THE OPPORTUNITES OF A DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN RAIL FREIGHT

In the framework of its 68th General Assembly UIP held a symposium on **TURNING DIGITALISATION INTO PERFORMANCE** on 24th of May at Palais Ferstel in Vienna. The Symposium brought together more than 100 high level representatives of wagon keepers, railway undertakings, shippers, policy makers and national associations from all over Europe. It offered the opportunity to openly discuss and exchange views with the European Commission, Shift2Rail and national authorities about strategic aspects of digitalisation and the necessity to identify common priorities for rail freight to embrace digitalisation and become more competitive.

“Bringing the rail freight sector with its very diverse but mutually interdependent actors into the digital age is both the challenge and gigantic opportunity of our times” stated **Dr. Heiko Fischer, UIP President** and continued “the spirit of Vienna will translate into more joint projects and initiatives moving rail freight forward.”

In times of fierce competition within the national and international freight transport market, it is of essence for the rail freight sector to increase its cost-efficiency, flexibility and reliability. In this context, digitalisation was seen not only as an enabler towards these objectives but also as a necessity to make rail easier, develop multimodality, new services and meet customers’ demands. Introducing new realities and completely redesigning the processes are the key elements all rail freight actors will have to address together.

Implementing new technologies in a fragmented market, where national barriers remain was identified as a key challenge for the rail freight sector. At the same time, the sector should not forget to look out for new ideas and innovations, which make economic sense to support a digital transformation of the sector. The Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking has here a key role to play and could become a valuable contributor and a joint platform for actors to develop and deploy common solutions. Furthermore, it was emphasised that it will be crucial to ensure interoperability between the systems and to develop common interfaces at European level. All stakeholders agreed on the importance for all actors involved in rail freight transport to move forward on sharing information among themselves not only as a means to streamline information flow but also as to provide quick-wins in increasing efficiency in rail freight.

Creating trust between the actors to introduce open-data exchanges and defining appropriate rules and terms of conditions for data sharing were also seen as central elements to enable and facilitate the transformation of the rail freight sector. For the European Commission, digitalisation of rail freight services encompasses providing the necessary funds via CEF, broadening the scope of the TSI on Telematics Applications for Freight as well as the new key initiative on e-freight documents published on the 17th of May in the framework of the Third Mobility Package.

All stakeholders believe that rail freight has a bright future as the backbone of European Mobility but clearly identified a need to focus their efforts and work together on a common vision and priorities for a successful deployment. The European Commission would welcome receiving a clear roadmap from the rail freight sector highlighting the priorities to foster digitalisation.

For a more flexible and reliable rail freight market, decision-makers and railway actors will have to speed up their work towards reversing the costs-benefits imbalance while at the same time becoming more digital. In sense, UIP will continue to be fully dedicated to uphold the spirit and the momentum of the discussions to support the digital transformation of the rail freight sector.

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UIP – International Union of Wagon Keepers a.i.s.b.l.

Founded in 1950, the UIP – International Union of Wagon Keepers, with its seat in Brussels, is the umbrella association of national associations from fourteen European countries, thus representing more than 200 freight wagon keepers and ECMs with more than 210'000 freight wagons, performing 50 % of the rail freight tonne-Kilometres throughout Europe. The UIP represents the members' concerns at international level. By means of research, lobbying and focused cooperation with all stakeholders and organisations interested in rail freight transportation, the UIP wants to secure on the long term the future of rail freight transport.