

Press announcement

UIP debates Increasing Efficiency in Rail Freight

The performance of rail freight transport is slowly recovering since 2009 economic crisis reaching 17.4% of the modal share for rail freight, according to the EU Statistical Pocketbook 2013. However, it remains competitively far behind and in third place after road and maritime (short sea shipping) transportation.

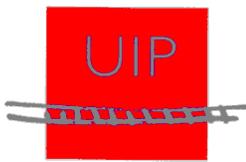
An increasing demand by customers for greener logistics, faster and reliable delivery of goods, and ambitions for expansion of their market to Eastern Europe and beyond, made it necessary to bring rail freight back on track. This means that together, the Sector and the European Institutions have to rethink the business model of freight transportation along the supply chain and to seek solutions to reduce costs and time-to-market for rail freight services making rail more competitive as well as more efficient as a mode of transport. On June 12 in Brussels, UIP held a symposium on INCREASING EFFICIENCY IN RAIL FREIGHT, bringing together high level and operational representatives of the European Commission DG MOVE, the ERA, OTIF, CER, ESC, UIRR, National Associations of Wagon Keepers and ECMs.

The Symposium offered an open discussion on the weaknesses in rail freight transportation and the need for political and financial support at Member State and EU levels to promote and provide incentives to achieve quick-wins for rail freight. The key messages carried through the discussions are summarised below.

Mr. Olivier Onidi, Director of European Mobility Network at DG Move, confirmed that the challenges for the railway sector to become more competitive include cutting costs, to increase productivity and to provide new added-value services. Through CEF, Shift2Rail initiative and putting forward a stronger role for ERA on Interoperability and Safety issues, the Commission will continue its efforts to **find practical measures to improve daily operations and promote innovative solutions for sustainable and attractive European rail freight services**

To succeed, Mr Onidi asks the railway actors to support the European Commission in defining the proper framework and to put forward ad-hoc projects which have potential.

According to the European Shippers Council (ESC), there is a growing interest among shippers for rail transportation. Policy Advisor **Mr. Laurie d'Hont**, believes in competition, however, unless progress is made in optimizing the business processes to ensure reliable door-to-door transport, customers will not be attracted to rail freight services and will be forced to choose other modes of transport that offer cheaper, flexible and faster services. A stronger cooperation among RUs and other actors is necessary if rail wants to respond to the increasing demand for the provision of reliable and timely information. In all efforts, appropriate infrastructure financing towards sidings and terminals is an essential prerequisite for efficient rail freight services.



Gerhard Troche, Policy Officer at DG Move focused on the activities of the European Commission in order to promote Wagonload traffic in Europe which still represents roughly 30% of today's rail freight traffic. He highlighted the European dimension of rail freight compared to passenger traffic and as such its importance to achieve the European Commission objectives. Besides the current activities linked to the development of the Rail Freight Corridors and implementation of the TEN-T Guidelines, he presented the preliminary results of the EC study on Wagonload. Mr. Troche made clear that ICT-based solutions for capacity booking, the management of rolling stock or tracking & tracing will only be successful if supported by measures to foster full implementation of EU legislation and funding for the construction and rehabilitation of private sidings.

According to Jürgen Maier, Head of International Affairs at BLS Cargo, "Increasing Efficiency in Rail Freight" will remain a dream as long as there is no political will to provide a fair level playing field. To raise rail freight attractiveness, the market actors will need to also come together and to re-define proper common standards. For a better rail freight market share in the short term, decision-makers and railway actors will have to speed up their work towards reversing the costs-benefits imbalance.

Mr. Ian Cleland, Head of Freight Market Development at Network Rail, presented the experiences of what an Infrastructure Manager can do to improve efficiency in Rail Freight services. He explained that in the UK Single Wagon Load services have been substituted by Domestic Intermodal services. To become proactive and to develop best practices for freight, Network Rail had first to listen to all the market players in order to define the relevant key priorities of investments. They concentrated then their efforts in developing projects for a high gauge network, train lengthening and better electrification. Such projects do not succeed in a one-step change, but in coming back every time and assessing how to improve in the different areas. Coupled with a 30-year horizon plan, this new UK approach is able today to provide higher capacity to develop rail freight services. Such measures also resulted in RU productivity gains per Train and per Working Staff. For Mr. Cleland, competition as a service culture remains an important driver for success.

Dr. Eckart Lehmann, President of UIP, concluded the discussions by highlighting the importance for all actors involved in rail freight transport to move forward on sharing information among themselves not only as a mean to streamline information flow but also as to provide quick-wins in increasing efficiency in rail freight.

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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 250 keepers with approximately 180.000 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.