

## UIP-Press Release

**Private wagons: The UIP demands a sure legal basis for international transport / top managers discussed this at the 2004 UIP Congress.**

The UIP Congress, which takes place every three years, assembled high-level European managers from rail goods transport institutions and undertakings at the Wiesbaden Kurhaus on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004. This manifestation, which was very well attended, on the main theme of "Private wagons – an opportunity for rail", showed a positive balance but was also partially critical of the effects of liberalisation.

180 000 freight wagons, that is, approximately one-third of the total fleet, are in the hands of private owners and account for almost one-half of rail freight traffic. For many decades, the owners of P wagons ensure that innovative transport means adapted to requirements are available for the economy. The financing and the risk of use of these wagons are borne exclusively by the P wagon sector. The advantage for shippers, networks and finally overall for the economy and the State, is obvious.

The UIP supports the intense orientation towards the market economy by all the actors involved in rail freight transport as the indispensable basis for the renewed activity of rail which must nevertheless not be reduced to nothing by the creation of a legal vacuum under the cover of free circulation of wagons in Europe.

In future, P wagons will no longer require to be incorporated in the wagon fleet of a State network, which means being registered according to its conditions to be able to circulate on the European network. At first sight this appears to be the logical result of the liberalisation efforts, but it contains an enormous defect.

In the near future, P wagon keepers should find themselves faced with legal chaos. Certainly, technical approval allows their wagons to be put into service on the track, but keepers must first determine the legal conditions in which this is done with the railway company users. If they want wagons to be put into service on the European level, they must renegotiate with each transport company which, in an environment in full expansion of several hundreds of former State networks and new private railways, turns out to be impossible, even more so that the unequal relationship between the contracting parties does not always allow non-discriminatory coexistence. It is obvious that such a contractual labyrinth means the end of free circulation of P wagons at the European level.

The UIP is sceptical regarding the disposition for investment and innovation in its sector for so long as the use of P wagons on the European level has not been guaranteed in the future by compulsory unified conditions. The consequences on the already critical state of European rail freight traffic would be severe.

The topicality and importance of the congress also appeared in the speeches of the main speakers at the plenary sessions, during which policy, the railway networks, customers and infrastructure managers were discussed. The Chairman of the German Bundestag Transport Commission, Eduard Oswald, Chairman of the Executive Board of Railion Deutschland AG, Dr Klaus Kremper, Director Refinery of TOTAL Deutschland GmbH, Dr Bernard Ricodeau, and the Secretary General of RailNetEurope, Joachim Kroll, gave an analysis of the situation from their respective viewpoints. In addition, high-level speakers from all over Europe examined the urgent problems for rail freight transport in several working groups.

In a concluding pressing appeal, the new elected Chairman of the UIP, Dr Heiko Fischer, Chairman of the Executive Board of VTG AG, addressed shippers, representatives of authorities, governments and the EU “taking into consideration the *positive contribution of P wagons in the development of rail traffic in Europe, I would ask you to give me your aid to create rules for the use of wagons valid for everyone without discrimination in order in this way to guarantee major investments for the sector in the future.*”

Information:

The presentations by the speakers at the Congress and the results of the working groups will shortly be made available on the site [www.uiprail.org](http://www.uiprail.org). The Congress's three working groups discussed the themes:

- Technical harmonisation – what are the next steps?
- The competitiveness of rail
- The role of wagon keepers in the new environment.

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