

PRESS RELEASE

Comparative study on road and rail safety in freight transport: Safety levels for rail freight are substantially higher.

(Brussels/Hamburg, 31.10.2013) On behalf of UIP and VPI Germany, hwh Gesellschaft für Transport-und Unternehmensberatung mbH carried out an analysis comparing safety in road and rail freight in Europe for the period 2006 till 2010. The study examines accident statistics records of rail freight in comparison to road freight in general and focuses on the numbers of fatalities and injuries suffered as a result of technical failures in vehicles or rolling stock. The study confirms that existing safety levels for rail freight are substantially higher than they are for road freight.

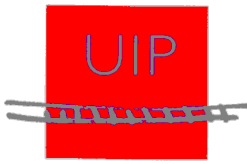
In recent years all railway actors and especially wagon keepers have been working towards achieving the highest possible safety level in order to meet the expectations of shippers, the general public and the political community. However, although technical failures relating to vehicles are rare in rail freight, they are not impossible, nor should they become inconceivable. It must be recognised that the probability of a technical structure to fail is not zero. Maintaining the safety of the public involves complicated trade-offs and decision-making. Based on impact assessments and costs-benefits analysis, the marginal costs of safety improvements should always be balanced.

All the measures aiming at enhancing rail freight safety in the field of vehicle maintenance have considerably increased the costs of keeping and operating freight cars, as another UIP study in 2011 described¹. For freight dispatched along the Rotterdam-Genoa corridor, if freight wagon costs increase by 20%, for example, the total costs for transport by rail will be driven up by between 3.8 % and 5.3%, implying a significant deterioration in the competitive position of rail as a mode of transport.

It is of great concern that imposing any further measures and increasing the cost burden in rail freight without generating significant safety benefits will harm the competitive position of rail as a mode of transport, leading to freight traffic shifting to road. In this sense, not only the modal shift targets of the 2011 White Paper on Transport are at risk but also the safety performance for freight transports as a global system.

Therefore, UIP invites all stakeholders in the rail freight sector as well as EU Institutions to carefully review the safety framework and optimise the safety of rail operations without introducing and imposing additional measures and requirements which do not take into account the trade-off mentioned above!

¹ Cf. UIP International Union of Wagon Keepers (2011), "Economic Impact of New Rules and Regulations", Final Report, Brussels.



UIP and VPI Germany remain confident that with the empowerment of ERA and the Recast of the Safety Directive in the 4th Railway Package, the authorities will define an adequate framework to address this issue.

Dr. Eckart Lehmann, President of UIP, highlighted: “The harmonisation of the technical framework within the sector should be our priority if we want to strengthen the acceptance of rail freight traffic around Europe and implement the appropriate risk control measures to learn from failures, that is, accidents.”

And **Malte Lawrenz, President of VPI, added:** “This study shows once more that the exposure of inhabitants to risks inherent to rail freight traffic is indeed low. In this sense, the objective of the European Regulatory Framework for safety to develop common safety methods based on proper risk analysis and risk assessments are absolutely necessary before introducing new measures relating to vehicles.”

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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.

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VPI - Vereinigung der Privatgüterwagen-Interessenten” (VPI), member of UIP,

Is the German Association of Wagons Keepers. With more than 170 members, most of which have activities relating to rail freight transport, the VPI represent the interest of German Wagon Keepers but also companies from the chemical and oil industry as well as maintenance workshops for freight wagons and manufacturers. The VPI member companies account for over 64,000 freight wagons in Europe. Founded in Berlin in 1921, the VPI head office is located in the Hanseatic city of Hamburg.

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