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26.05.2025

Keepers' Summit 2025 : a better role for rail in multimodal logistics chains in Spain and in Europe

UIP – the International Union of Wagon Keepers in cooperation with its Spanish member association FAPROVE welcomed 100 rail freight stakeholders from around Europe to its annual flagship conference – the ‘Keepers’ Summit’ – on 23 May 2025 in Valencia, Spain. A special edition, as it coincides with the 75th anniversary of the founding of UIP in 1950.

Opened by UIP’s president, **Johann Feindert**, the conference focused on **how to enhance the integration of Spanish rail freight into domestic and international logistic chains, especially with the neighbouring countries Portugal and France**. Discussions emphasized the setup of modern infrastructure that meets rail needs but also crystallized the strategic importance to partner up more strongly with the other modes of transport with a view to attracting a range of diverse clients with efficient multimodal logistics solutions.

Spain has a 4% rail freight modal share and is taking steps to reach at least 10% by 2030. FAPROVE president **Julián Gacimartín** highlighted the efforts of the Spanish government to significantly modernize Spain’s rail network, underpinned by financing from the RRF and CEF.

Spain being an important transit country, **José Antonio Sebastián** (Spanish Commissioner for the Atlantic Corridor) and **Josep Vicent Boira** (Spanish Commissioner for the Mediterranean Corridor) detailed the great efforts underway to improve the corridors with notably mixed gauge, digitalized operations and better cross boarder connections.

Zooming in on the Spanish situation, the first panel was unanimous about the environmental and logistical benefits of implementing rolling motorways. They can be a boost to rail freight with the right infrastructure in place. Moderated by journalist Antonio Martínez (Transporte XXI), speakers **Mar Chao** (Port of Valencia), **Carlos Pereda** (TRAMESA), **Antonio Aguilar Mediavilla** (ADIF), **Juan Carlos Arocas** (TRANS ITALIA) and **Carlos Omaña** (VTG) pointed out that the demand is there but the works to ready the infrastructure are still on-going. Modern freight wagons for intermodal operations are available but other elements like adapted loading gauge material and adequate services in terminals have to be put in place. A customer-focused approach demands that rail offers the same quick turnarounds and delivery times in line with road realities, and this calls for optimized operations from factory to last mile.

*“The link between ports and rolling motorways needs to be seamless”,
advocated **Mar Chao**, President of the port of Valencia.*

In the panel on Intermodality moderated by journalist **Aitor Vieco** (El Mercantil), speakers **Jaime González** (EWALS), **Xavier Jaso** (AECOC), **Nuria Lacaci** (ACE) and **Jordi Ortuño** (ERMEWA) emphasized the customers’ priorities for competitive pricing, sustainability and reliability. In that regard, all roads potentially lead to rail and not just in Spain but everywhere. The crux being for rail

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to evolve to live up to those demands. A better outreach to SMEs would also prove beneficial as they often don't have enough information on what is possible in terms of intermodal logistics.

"We need intermodal operators, not just rail operators. There is a lack of the right service culture and educational information: we need to show that all goods can go by train",

Nuria Lacaci, Secretary General of the Association of Spanish Shippers, put it in a nutshell.

Rounding off the discussions was an on-site demonstration by the manufacturer VOITH of their Digital Automatic Coupler CargoFlex design whose development is part and parcel of the TRANS4M-R project by Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking.

Finally, **Johann Feindert**, UIP President and CEO of GATX concluded:

"We want to work together. We want to take the best of every mode and offer the best possible service to our clients. That is a big change in mentality. There are clear plans in Spain with proper funding to make those necessary upgrades for a better network a reality. If that is not a clear commitment to the future of logistics with rail at its core, I don't know what is."

Background

Founded in 1950, [UIP – the International Union of Wagon Keepers](#), with its seat in Brussels, is the umbrella association of national associations from 14 European countries, thus representing more than 250 freight wagon keepers and Entities in Charge of Maintenance (ECMs). The fourteen member countries are: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

As the voice for more than 248'000 rail freight wagons, UIP represents half of the whole European wagon fleet - one of the most important resources for rail freight transportation in Europe. Research, lobbying and constant exchange with all stakeholders and organisations interested in rail freight transportation play an important part for the association in gearing all efforts towards a step change in efficiency gains in rail freight services. By means of participation in many working groups and committees at European and international level, UIP brings the perspective and interests of wagon keepers to the table and works in cooperation with all interested parties to secure the future of rail freight transport in the long term.

UIP is recognised by the European Commission as a Representative Body in the railway sector.

On the 75th anniversary of UIP:

UIP is proud to celebrate in 2025 its 75 years of existence. Starting out with 11 members and around 65 000 wagons, the association continuously grew to encompass today 14 members and almost 250 000 wagons. You can find more on UIP's journey from its beginnings to today [in this article here on our website](#).

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