

Current issues of European Combined Transport

For two decades prior to the economic crisis of 2009, Combined Transport averaged an annual growth rate of close to 7%. This propelled CT to become the largest and only dynamically growing production system of rail freight.



Ralf-Charley Schulze, President of UIRR, the International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport

sis and the collapse of the price of oil caused a change in the decade-long growth trend: first came a general decline that was recovered in the meantime, then a decline in shorter distance consignments in favour of long-distance relations. In principle Combined Transport is competitive when the distance to be covered by rail or other sustainable modes of transport performing the long-distance section of the transport chain exceeds 300 kilometre. However it is a fact that the actual average distance covered by a CT consignment averaged 882 kilometre in 2015. Subsequently, shorter distance CT services are suffering.

The main present challenges of Combined Transport may be grouped as follows:

- **External issues:** due to the crisis involving the Ukraine, that country is difficult to be used for transit

towards Russia and China; the EU sanctions against Russia have caused a decline in volumes destined to Russia, the migration crisis has made transiting rail freight traffic through the Balkan peninsula totally unreliable, while migration-related disturbances also affected the reliability of rail freight traffic between France and the UK on the Channel Tunnel.

- **Cheap oil:** since the price of traction electricity does not follow the price of diesel, made cheap by the collapse of the price of oil, rail freight did not gain the ability to match the freight rate cuts implemented by road hauliers, which undermines the price competitiveness of - especially short-haul - Combined Transport.

- **Issues of rail freight:** 1. there is a lack of train paths for freight trains on some highly used sections of the European rail network; 2. the quality performance of rail freight is inconsistent: while the punctuality of freight trains is near or over 90 percent in the domestic network of the UK and the networks of Sweden and Norway, on the continent the same figure is closer to 60 percent; and 3. the deficiencies of the network in terms of technical parameters and interoperability undermine the productivity.

Four passenger trains per hour instead of six

While external issues and global (oil price) developments are what they are, a lot could be done regarding the competitiveness of rail freight in Europe. Politicians need to explain

to their citizens that having six PSO passenger trains an hour means that the right lanes of our motorways will be occupied by a "train of trucks". If only four passenger trains were running an hour, it would open up two train paths for 750 metre-long freight trains, which in turn could remove over 100 trucks from the roads.

Heavy preference for passenger traffic

There is a similar problem with traffic priority rules: firstly they are different from country to country and secondly there is a heavy preference for passenger traffic. Subsequently, along the same lines where freight trains achieve a punctuality of 60 percent, passenger trains deliver a punctuality performance of over 90 percent! Interestingly, in the Nordic

countries and the UK, where the train in time has the right of way, both passenger and freight trains deliver superior results to the rest of Europe.

Finally, the quantity and the orientation of investments must be mentioned. Here also a preference for passenger-related projects can be observed, while freight related projects often suffer delays. Funding is often not provided for harmonisation of the maximum train length (750 metre), the axle load and the profile gauge.

UIRR, as the industry association of Combined Transport, works hard to catalyse the correction of these deficiencies. In the same time UIRR pleads for an intermodal initiative and a better regulatory framework in Europe, in order to achieve the level playing field between all existing modes of transport in the logistic chains.



The punctuality of freight trains is only 60 percent.

Photo: UIRR/DB

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NEWS

Germar Wacker and Michael Fohrer appointed Presidents with Bombardier Transportation



Germar Wacker, President Mainline and Metros, Region Central/Eastern Europe and CIS, Transportation.

In April 2016 Germar Wacker was appointed President, Mainline and Metros for the Central and Eastern Europe and CIS regions. Shortly after this, in May 2016, Wacker has also been appointed new Chairman of the German Management Board by the Supervisory Board of Bombardier Transportation GmbH. After his activities as Bombardier site manager of the Vienna and Bautzen plants he became "Head of Project Management, Operations and Customer Support" in 2007 for the "Light Rail Vehicles" (LRV) business and in March 2010 he was promoted President of Light Rail Vehicles. In January 2015, Germar was appointed as leader of Bombardier Transportation's



Michael Fohrer, President Locomotives, Light Rail Vehicles and Services, Region Central/Eastern Europe and CIS, Transportation.

global Propulsion and Controls division. Also in April 2016 Michael Fohrer was appointed president of Locomotives, Light Rail Vehicles and Services. In addition to heading the regional activities for the region Central/Eastern Europe and CIS in these three divisions, he assumes the worldwide responsibility for the development of locomotives and light rail vehicles in other regions of Bombardier Transportation. Fohrer joined Bombardier Transportation in 2008 as Vice President Services for Germany and Northern Europe. Since 2014 he has been responsible for the services business in the newly created CEE region. Bombardier Transportation | Halle 2.2 | 101 and 7.1c | 201