



Conclusions of the 2018 Rail Freight Day

The 2018 Rail Freight Day provided a platform for debate on all major aspects of the rail freight sector. These included challenges in the area of intermodal competitiveness, better capacity for rail freight, the resolution of operational barriers and a better integration of rail in multimodal freight transport.

The Commission reaffirmed its support for rail freight as a key element of its freight transport policy, fully integrated with other transport modes as highlighted in the 2018 Year of Multimodality. Rail freight will have to significantly increase its market share as wider policy goals linked to climate change are at stake.

Stakeholders reported on many on-going or planned initiatives. In 2019, the Commission expects to see tangible results from these initiatives. Member States reaffirmed political support through the “Vienna Declaration” presented by the Austrian Presidency and the follow up to the Rotterdam Declaration. The rail freight sector demonstrated its ambitions and efforts by reporting on the progress on the 11 priorities in the Sector Statement and by presenting the new sector initiative “30 by 2030 – Rail freight strategy to boost modal shift”.

The Commission confirmed that EU support would continue to be available for rail freight. However, the benefits from infrastructure investments need to be optimised by urgently addressing the operational deficiencies of rail freight transport.

DG MOVE announced a number of initiatives such as the launch of the evaluation of the Regulation on the Rail Freight Corridors and the launch of the 2019 CEF Transport Call for Proposals.

The Commission outlined the challenges to rail freight in terms of regulation, infrastructure and operations. The biggest potential to make progress in the short term lies in the field of operations where progress can be achieved at relatively low costs as compared to infrastructure investments. The main conclusion on infrastructure is that EU investments should bring tangible results without delay. As regards regulation, an adequate legislative framework is in place and the focus should now be on its implementation and evaluation.

The Commission recognises the need to ensure consistency and synergies between the various initiatives and to identify any strategic issues requiring additional attention. These considerations may lead to the development of an EU rail freight strategy.

The next Rail Freight Day will take place in spring 2020, giving stakeholders more time to progress on the ongoing initiatives, including in particular the Timetable Redesign Project, the ELETA project, the European Rail Locations Portal, the three priorities of the Issues Logbook and the expected language pilot projects. Synergies with the “30 by 2030” strategy should be exploited.