

Press Release
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Trans-European rail freight transport - what future lies ahead?

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU jointly organised a political debate on the future of trans-European rail freight transport on 9 July. The event was a good occasion to reflect upon current issues and obstacles preventing rail freight from realising its full potential and on potential policy measures to remove these barriers and reinforce the competitiveness of rail freight.

The debate focused on how to better integrate rail in the logistic chain and how to turn it into an attractive solution for shippers - whether alone or in combination with other modes. It touched, amongst other elements, on the necessity to guarantee efficient hinterland links for European ports and to provide green and efficient solutions for the shipping of goods destined to or coming from overseas, notably Asia.

Lithuanian Transport and Communications Minister Rimantas Sinkevičius said: *“As outlined in the 2011 European Commission Transport White Paper, the future prosperity of our continent will depend on the ability of all of its regions to remain fully and competitively integrated in the world economy. Efficient transport is vital in making this happen. Given its strategic assets, rail is ideally placed to provide efficient links among EU countries and between the EU, CIS and Asia for the transport of goods, as the backbone of a sustainable transport system in Europe. A Growing Europe and an Open Europe are two of the Lithuanian Presidency’s top priorities. Making the most of rail freight’s potential for the transport of goods both within the EU and towards Asia will be essential to reach these goals.”*

CER Executive Director Libor Lochman added: *“Rail freight has strong assets, such as its low environmental impact and its high energy efficiency. Rail is also one of the safest modes of transport and is particularly suited to the medium and long distance transport of goods - in particular towards Asia, a strategic commercial partner for Europe. Yet, in spite of these advantages and of various policy initiatives introduced by the European Commission during the last ten years, the modal share of rail in land freight transport has decreased dramatically. Rail freight operators have made important efforts in order to better serve the needs of their customers, and will continue to do so. However, these efforts will fail to reach their objective if they are not completed by essential framework conditions such as sufficient investment into infrastructure, measures to remove technical and administrative bottlenecks, and conditions to allow all modes to compete on a level playing field. These framework conditions should be at the core of the EU strategy in the field of transport.”*

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The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together more than 70 European railway undertakings and infrastructure companies. CER represents the interests of its members

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towards the European institutions as well as other policy makers and transport actors. CER's main focus is promoting the strengthening of rail as essential to the creation of a sustainable transport system which is efficient, effective and environmentally sound. For more information, see www.cer.be

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