

UIP POSITION PAPER

16/04/2021

UIP contribution to the Commission public consultation on the Revision of the Communication on important projects of common European interest

With this position paper, the International Union of Wagon Keepers (UIP) calls for “Rail system innovation towards a Single European Rail Area” to become an important project for common European interest under the Communication on important projects of common European interest (IPCEI).

Make Rail innovation projects IPCEI-eligible and open for simplified national co-funding

While the current IPCEI rules provide an effective tool to incentivise Member States cooperation to fund cross-border innovation projects of common European interest, the greenest mode of transport rail needs to be duly recognised to its due worth and play a more prominent role to achieve the European Green Deal ambitions. Consequently, we strongly believe that the **deployment of rail innovation needs to be classified as IPCEI-eligible and be open for simplified national co-funding under the respective EU State aid rules.**

Turning the vision of Rail as the backbone of sustainable multimodal mobility into reality requires concrete plans that will transform the railway system into an efficient cross-border transport mode that successfully competes with road and aviation. In this context and to ensure a coherent, coordinated and timely roll-out into the market, rail innovations developed with EU funds, such as Horizon Europe and CEF, must be recognised as IPCEI which benefit from facilitations to set the seal for co-funding by Member States.

Cross-border innovative projects of EU interests which need to enjoy simplified Commission State aid procedures for national co-funding include:

- deployment across the whole railway network of digital automated couplers (DAC) for freight trains (necessary investments estimated at 10 billion EUR for retrofitting approximately 500,000 freight wagons, 40,000 locomotives and related rail last mile infrastructures);
- deployment across the whole railway network of ERTMS both on-board and trackside;
- deployment across the whole railway network of digital solutions for traffic management, path allocation, ticketing and freight logistic;
- deployment across the whole railway network of autonomous vehicles and artificial intelligence (AI).

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In light of the European Year of Rail, the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy goal of doubling the rail freight market share by 2050 can only be realised when rail innovations are deployed across the EU and supported simultaneously by European and national funding schemes. To cut short with the current habits of step-by-step, project-by-project national financing of innovations with cross-border dimension, **the eligibility of the innovative cross-border rail projects with an EU-added value mentioned above as IPCEI is imperative** if the European Commission is serious about achieving its ambitious climate goals and improving efficiency across the whole transport system as well as enabling automated mobility and smart traffic management systems.

While we can already witness the powerful changes that can be brought forward by instruments like Shift2Rail, UIP believes that it is now critical to focus on deploying rail innovations without jeopardising interoperability competitiveness in rail freight. The success of the required modal shift to rail depends on the readiness of the European Commission to include rail innovation as IPCEI as to define an appropriate homogenous European and national funding scheme to ensure the uniform deployment of new technologies in rail with reasonable transition times.

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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 200 freight wagon keepers and ECMs with more than 220'000 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. www.uiprail.org

