

ANNEX 6

Prioritisation of Core Network Corridor (CNC) Rail breakthroughs 2017 – 2023

The realisation of the CNC's with all the TEN-T requirements are long-term projects; since - in many cases - major infrastructure bottlenecks that need to be removed require major investments over very long periods of time. At the same time, operationally, administratively and politically, there is a need to achieve results which are tangible and visible in a shorter period of time. Commissioner Bulc has highlighted to the railway sector at all possible occasions how essential it is to increase quality through competitiveness and to deliver tangible results now. We also need these tangible results to maintain the support of the Council of Ministers, European Parliament and European Commission.

First efforts with the objective of short-term tangible results have been initiated in the Rotterdam Ministerial Declaration¹⁵ and Sector statement¹⁶ on boosting international rail freight, presented during the TEN-T Days in June, 2016. The sector¹⁷ committed itself to enhancing the competitiveness of rail freight, and to improving the quality, reliability and efficiency of transporting goods across Europe. Like on other Corridors, another initiative has been the signature of the Joint Ministerial Declaration¹⁸ by the 8 Transport Ministers of the CNC Orient East Med Corridor on 21st June 2016 on the effective improvements to eliminate bottlenecks and facilitate international traffic on the OEM Rail Freight Corridor. This Ministerial Declaration included an Action Programme on 15 priorities from cross border operations, infrastructure works, capacity issues and governance.

These statements are a good basis for defining how to reach *rail breakthroughs*, but in order to get them implemented in the period of 2017 - 2023, the entire sector needs to leave its historical comfort zone and make significant efforts to find the right way out of the existing deadlock.

Rail breakthroughs can be defined, beside the investment programs in infrastructure and rolling stock, as accelerated actions leading to improvements of the functioning and efficiency of the railway transport sector by implementing e.g. administrative and operational actions at lowest possible cost.

It is clear that major infrastructure projects with implementation target dates by 2030 cannot deliver results in the short term. In addition there is an important risk that infrastructure investments efficiency will be lowered by technical, operational and administrative or interoperability obstacles. The major part of these technical, operational, interoperability and administrative obstacles which handicap the efficiency of the railway services can be solved without major investments. They are indeed efficiency measures that aim to use the existing railway infrastructure more efficiently without incurring significant additional costs. These are real breakthroughs for the sector. They need to be put in place in a concrete and pragmatic way in the same timescale as that agreed on for the European ERTMS Deployment Plan over the period 2017 - 2023. These measures, known as rail breakthroughs, should be planned and implemented in parallel with the large infrastructure projects, since breakthroughs can significantly increase the competitiveness of the rail freight transport and the efficiency and sustainability of large

¹⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/themes/infrastructure/news/doc/2016-06-20-ten-t-days-2016/rfc-declaration.pdf>

¹⁶ http://www.cer.be/sites/default/files/publication/Corridor_Sector_Statement_20160520_final.pdf

¹⁷ Rail sector associations and their members representing the interests of the shippers, freight forwarders, rail freight operators, intermodal operators, intermodal terminals, infrastructure managers, allocation bodies, rail freight corridors, and rail equipment suppliers

¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/political_rail_cross_border_declaration_signed_0.pdf

infrastructure projects. Future EU investments could be conditionally linked to the operational implementation of such breakthroughs. This would significantly contribute to a better modal share and the decarbonisation of transport.

There is a definite possibility to have rail breakthroughs on each corridor, if we consider the potential included in the removal of interoperability obstacles, more concretely: deployment of ERTMS and removal of administrative and operational barriers. These two elements together form the first phase of the TEN-T programme to upgrade the operational efficiency of the railway network in Europe. By implementing them, we can expect to achieve 40-50% of the total benefits of the interoperable corridor. It is self-evident that ERTMS is covered by the ERTMS Coordinator, but CNC Coordinators can play a crucial political role in facilitating the implementation of the remaining efficiency measures.

In order to make those breakthroughs real, we need to use already existing management structures more intensively and we need to ensure that those structures are cooperating at the necessary level and intensity.

The Rail Freight Corridors (RFC) with their governance in place: Executive Board (representatives of the Transport Ministries) and Management Board (representatives of the Infrastructure Managers) and Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups (gathering the railway undertakings running on the corridor and terminals having traffic on the corridor) form one of those structures.

Another existing structure is the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) introduced as ERTMS system authority by 4th Railway Package. ERA has been charged by the EU Institutions to contribute - on technical matters - to the implementation of the European Union legislation, aiming at improving the competitive position of the railway sector by a. o. enhancing the level of interoperability of rail systems.

Currently nine RFC's are operational with a further two in developmental stage but their definition of priorities, achieved efficiency and way of working vastly vary. Such breakthroughs have been discussed regularly by some of the RFC's, but many of them have not yet focused sufficiently on adequately addressing those issues. This should, however, be encouraged in order not to hamper the realisation of a competitive rail freight transport system which is the main objective of the Rail Freight Corridor legislation. Whilst the RFC Regulation does not give a clear mandate for the RFCs to tackle all the related issues, the Joint Ministerial Declarations of Rotterdam encourages them to prepare and define specific actions as they are an ideal platform to contribute to achieving the rail breakthroughs in a corridor-oriented, coordinated and market-driven way since they enable constant contact and coordination between all the main sector players. .

In order to get rail breakthroughs implemented at RFC level and focus the necessary resources for this, CNC Coordinators can bring positive influence at high political level in the involved Member States. RFC's should be able to identify and prioritise the corridor specific breakthroughs and define their implementation with ERA, which should provide the appropriate technical support and DG MOVE. To allow the European Coordinators to better define the support needed, a bi-annual report of the RFC's and DG MOVE railway units explaining in details the progress made in the different issues is a prerequisite. The content of this paper can be part of the third CNC Coordinators' Work Plan as objective to be realised with high-priority during the period 2017 - 2023.

Solid and detailed technical knowledge of the colleagues at ERA is the guarantee of interoperable implementation of the railways in Europe. Close and regular cooperation between ERA, RFC's and CNC's is a prerequisite for a successful and compatible implementation of numerous breakthroughs; therefore it needs to be made very clear to all of those stakeholders through an exchange at the highest political level that only a pro-active common way of approaching and solving the problems ensures a rapid realisation of a sustainable and competitive railway network.

An excellent example for the need to focus on rail breakthroughs is the recent disturbance that happened on Rhine-Alpine CNC/RFC close to Rastatt: significant financial damage to the railway undertakings could have been avoided, if necessary interoperability related issues had been previously

resolved. Just to mention a few: effective contingency plans coordinated between infrastructure managers and communicated to customers or previously agreed pragmatic common language solutions (instead of requiring the knowledge of the neighbouring country) could have avoided such a major damage of freight traffic. Another argument is the seamless cross-border circulation of trains: lengthy and unnecessary waiting time at borders can be avoided through different measures like simple mutual trust, harmonisation of operational or administrative rules of the involved Member States.

We could reach two objectives with the realisation of breakthroughs: on the one hand it would be possible to show tangible results in a relatively short time horizon for railways and the positive effect on the important investments which would be supportive for the upcoming MFF negotiations, and on the other hand we would make the existing railway infrastructure more competitive towards other transport modes through an efficient and interoperable use. Future EU investments could be conditionally linked to the operational implementation of the breakthroughs. This would significantly contribute to a better modal share and to the decarbonisation of transport.
