

Strengthen European industrial and trade networks through efficient rail freight transport

Paper with proposals
for the 2024-2029 legislative period
4th June 2024



The EU wants to increase rail freight transport by 50 % by 2030 and double it by 2050.

The European Commission set an ambitious modal shift target for rail freight transport, namely growing rail freight tonne-kilometres by 50 % until 2030 and doubling it by 2050.

Progress must be tracked with measurable actions and interim steps.

Achieving the climate-relevant targets contained in the Strategy for Smart and Sustainable Mobility must be tracked with measurable actions and interim steps.

Organizations have outlined the most important measures for rail freight transport.

The associations ERFA, DIE GÜTERBAHNEN, UIRR and RailGood have summarised the most important measures for rail freight transport needed to deliver the objective for the 2024-2029 legislative period below.

1.

Intermodal and intramodal competition: the race to the bottom must stop



Fair Competition

Member states should not be market participants.

The EU should take the next step towards establishing a fair and well-functioning transport market in rail freight transport as well. There is no reason for the member states to act indirectly as market participants via state-owned, integrated companies. As with other modes of transport, the member states should concentrate on infrastructure tasks, framework conditions, stimulating innovation with customer value and their control functions in terms of safety and fairness.

Increasing Efficiency and Economy

The EU and member states should make rail freight transport more efficient and economical.

The EU and the Member States should decisively make rail freight transport more efficient and economical without compromising its inherently high level of safety by simplifying administrative procedures, simplifying operating regulations, setting technical standards that apply throughout Europe and increasing the degree of automation and digitalization. The European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) should drive forward the conceptual development and management of a standardised European railway policy.

Equal Safety Standards

Fair competition requires fair controls.

Safety-relevant requirements in road freight transport should match the level of rail freight through establishing minimum checks and corresponding penalties for infringements: checking the weight and securing of loads, checking the permitted lengths of trucks, checking driving and rest times, social security cover for drivers and checking the fulfilment of technical requirements.

Multimodal Fee Structure

Infrastructure charges must be taken in a multimodal context.

Decisions on setting railway infrastructure charges for running trains and use of stabling and shunting tracks must be taken in a multimodal context, considering how changes to charges will impact modal shift, and must be established in a multiannual framework. Compensation schemes must be developed in case relevant infrastructure closures and RU have significant revenue loss and additional costs due to rerouting. An equal and fair market playing field between transport modes and member states must be central.

TEN-T Compliant Network

Expansion and new construction of rail infrastructure must be in line with political objectives.

The framework conditions for trains with a length of 740 metres and a P400 profile must be implemented in accordance with the recently revised TEN-T Guidelines in all member states. Isolated increases in dimensions and weights in road freight transport make the modal shift strategy difficult to achieve and should only be implemented if they safeguard multimodal compatibility and ensure fair intermodal competitive conditions.

Breaking Down Language Barriers

Language rules in international rail freight transport should be simplified.

The current language regulations in international rail transport are a major obstacle to intermodal competition. Various solutions have already been proposed for simplification (e.g. simplified border regimes, standardised language, a compulsory second language, computer-aided assistance). The European Commission, with the involvement of the sector, must decide on short notice.

Promoting Innovations

Innovations in rail freight transport should be promoted across the entire EU.

Innovations in rail freight transport must be consistently promoted by the EU across all countries, above all the development of a feasible European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) deployment strategy. The simultaneous introduction of innovations across the board causes considerable additional costs, which must be proportionally compensated. A transition must be made from technology push to a focus on customer value and economic feasibility for carriers.

2.

Rail must be given priority in intermodal investment decisions



Sustainable Funding

Funding should align with EU law and environmental criteria.

Funding flows should be aligned across all modes of transport pursuant to outstanding EU law and reflecting climate and environmental criteria.

Standardise Toll Calculation

Infrastructure and environmental impact costs should be charged and used to expand the rail infrastructure.

The European Commission should implement a uniform basic system for land transport throughout Europe. It should combine the charging of infrastructure costs with the inclusion of environmental impact costs, apply to the entire road network and also finance the strengthening of environmentally friendly rail infrastructure.

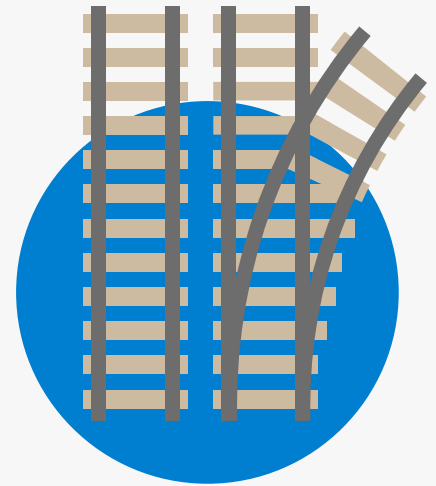
Phasing Out Subsidies

Environmentally harmful subsidies and tax benefits should be phased out.

To finance the modal shift in transport the tax exemption for both diesel and kerosene fuels should be phased out and the gradual reduction of other environmentally harmful subsidies, tax benefits or tax exemptions should be implemented.

3.

New and expanded infrastructure with an European perspective



Integrated Infrastructure Planning

Rail infrastructure planning should be harmonised between passenger and freight transport.

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ERTMS: The Future Is Now

A successful and business-friendly ERTMS deployment strategy requires Europe-wide harmonization.

A successful and business-friendly ERTMS deployment strategy requires Europe-wide harmonisation of funding and a noticeable simplification of approval processes. Policy regime is necessary to ensure future-proof and affordable ERTMS, also in relation to the implementation of FRMCS. The EU must gain more control over the Member States on a harmonized corridor rollout of ERTMS, which is affordable and financeable for users of the railway network and feasible for suppliers of infrastructure and rolling stock.

Efficient Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal

Maintenance and renewal of rail infrastructure require harmonized coordination.

To increase efficiency, the maintenance and renewal of railway infrastructure should be managed and harmonized in accordance with European rules. It is necessary to establish predictive maintenance processes for all railway infrastructure on a European level. In addition, infrastructure managers should be regulated and incentivized to limit customer inconvenience when planning track work.

Optimized Border Crossing

Border crossings should be optimized to support international supply chains.

Supply chains are almost always international. Therefore it is urgent to make border crossings to comply with the KPI defined in the recently adopted TEN-T-Regulation.

Improving Noise Protection

Noise protection measures should be improved along heavily used routes.

Enhancing passive noise protection – like alongside motorways – throughout the busiest sections of the network for even greater support of rail freight among the population.

Sustainable Traction Energy

Traction electricity should be provided from renewable sources.

A strategy for the sustainable expansion of traction energy generation is needed already today.