

IRG Rail

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IRG-Rail Plenary Assembly held in Rotterdam

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Regulators ask for better access to rolling stock and a boost for the freight market

The Hague, the Netherlands, 16 November 2015

The Independent Regulators' Group - Rail (IRG-Rail) held its Plenary Assembly on November 11-12 in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Rail regulators from 26 European countries gathered to approve common positions on the role and instruments for regulatory bodies under the Fourth Railway Package. Also, the Plenary Assembly agreed on common initial thoughts on the Revision of the Freight Corridor Regulation.

Access to rolling stock

The position paper on the regulators' role and instruments under the Fourth Package has been accompanied by a survey on access to rolling stock for competitors of state-owned enterprises. The survey revealed that the liberalization of the European rail market cannot be fully completed without setting requirements on making rolling stock available to competitors by the previous operators. The Council recently removed such requirements from the Fourth Package. IRG-Rail believes this is a bad idea.

"At this point, there are no rules about the transfer of rolling stock once a tender process has been completed," explains Henk Don, IRG-Rail Chair. "Incumbents are able to simply refuse to resell trains they no longer need. Or they ask an unrealistically high price. Such behavior creates barriers to entry for operators that wish to enter the rail market. "

Rail freight transport needs a boost

The European rail regulators have also adopted common initial thoughts on the functioning of the rail freight transport market.

"What we are observing is that European rail freight transport does not meet the criteria for a well-functioning market just yet," says Mr. Don, IRG-Rail Chair. "The creation of freight corridors has been a step in the right direction, but the rail freight transport market currently does not function as it should. If we are not careful, competition with road freight transport and inland waterway freight transport will not get off the ground."

For the current revision of the Freight Corridor Regulation, IRG-Rail calls for amendments to regulations, which are needed to improve the market for rail freight transport. Mr. Don explains: “Stopgap solutions are insufficient for realizing a well-functioning market for rail freight transport. Concrete and clear steps forward are needed. As regulators, we also ask the European Commission to clarify our powers.”

Also at the Plenary Assembly, Anne Yvrande-Billon of the French regulator was elected as Vice-Chair for 2016. The next Plenary Assembly will be held in 2016, and will be chaired by Krzysztof Dyl of the Polish regulator, the current Vice-Chair.

Note to editors:

1. The IRG-Rail is a network currently comprising independent rail Regulatory Bodies from twenty-five European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.
2. Further information can be found on the website of the IRG-Rail at www.irg-rail.eu