

Platform of Rail Infrastructure Managers in Europe

23rd Plenary Meeting,

27 June 2024

CCAB-2B

Centre de Conférences Albert Borschette, European Commission

Rue Froissart 36, Brussels and via Webex

Summary Record

Co-Chairs: Alain Quinet, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Strategy & Corporate Affairs, SNCF Réseau & Kristian Schmidt, Director Land Transport, DG MOVE

1. Welcome

Alain Quinet welcomed participants and recalled that:

- The charging sub-group, led by Vincenzo and Maria (ADIF) works on future practices related to the Commission's upcoming guidelines on TACs.
- The KPI and benchmarking subgroup has extended the scope of its KPI report with a focus on asset condition and on the environmental impact of infrastructure management activities.
- There is a new task force on the transition from PRIME to ENIM, led by Linda and Alfred. In this context, Alain also met RNE in Vienna to discuss the future expected role of the network coordinator.

The allocation body from Luxembourg, ACF (Administration des chemins de fer, part of the Ministère de la Mobilité et des Travaux publics), has recently joined PRIME. Its Director Claude Mahowald introduced the organisation.

2. Adoption of agenda and approval of the summary of the 22nd meeting

The agenda and minutes of the previous plenary were adopted without comments.

3. Ongoing Commission initiatives

Kristian Schmidt, Director Land Transport, DG MOVE

Eddy Liégeois, acting Director Investment, Innovative and Sustainable Transport, DG MOVE

Kristian Schmidt explained how the ongoing institutional transition affects DG MOVE. For the Commission, this is a time of transition and creativity, assessing what has been done and what to do during the next five years.

Some challenges will certainly remain, e.g. Ukraine and Moldova accession negotiations were started. On Ukraine, although grain exports are now predominantly (> 70%) via maritime transport, the risk of disruption of the Black Sea corridor has to be considered and improving links via land (rail, road) to Ukraine (Solidarity Lanes). Ukraine is preparing to adopt a railway law with the view

to align with the EU acquis.

ERTMS rollout and national implementation plans: MSs are obliged to supply COM with their national ERTMS implementation plans by end of June. ERTMS rollout is a coordinated effort, and cross-border lines cannot just be equipped with ERTMS on one side of the border only. COM will also look at compliance with TEN-T requirements. Already the national implementation plans of some MSs were received, waiting for others.

Ongoing assessment of the recast Directive: Two important developments stemming from the Governance Directive: liberalisation of domestic services, and provisions on unbundling/vertically integrated undertakings. Starting to see the effects of these provisions in the area of liberalisation. COM is to evaluate the Directive by the end of this year, with a special focus on highspeed services and possible discriminatory practices related to existence of vertically integrated undertakings. Consultants are providing support. In parallel, the sector is consulted on the impacts of the Directive through SERAF.

There was an update on the recently revised TEN-T Regulation, which will soon enter into force. Following it, COM will launch the process of nominating the TEN-T Coordinators. New Regulation contains a lot for rail (infrastructure standards and operational targets), with (compared to 2013 Regulation) strengthened requirements for ERTMS, loading gauge, train length, frequency of trains circulating on network and dwelling times. Another important element is the integration of neighbouring third countries / accession countries. New corridor work plans will be prepared soon and, on this basis, COM will prepare implementing decisions around mid-2026 / early 2027 identifying the main projects to be carried out on the corridors, on time for the new MFF which will start in 2028. Regarding the next MFF, COM proposals will be presented by mid-2025 and work is ongoing internally on the structure of the next MFF – there is a strong push for simplification of the different funding schemes. Next CEF call will be launched in September with a much lower budget than the ongoing (third) call (about 2.5bn).

Q&A:

CER highlighted the importance of projects that are not cross-border projects, such as ERTMS, Digital Automatic Coupling, Digital Capacity Management, which also have an important EU dimension. MOVE explained that these are also important. But it is often easier to make the case that cross-border projects should be financed by EU money and not from national envelopes.

Military corridors were also discussed because of a question by EIM.

4. Strategic discussion on priorities for the next Commission mandate

Moderator: *Sandro Santamato, Head of Unit Single European Rail Area, DG MOVE*

Speakers for the strategic discussion:

- *Alain Quinet, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Strategy & Corporate Affairs, SNCF Réseau*
- *John Voppen, CEO Prorail*
- *Johann Pluy, Member of the Board of Management, ÖBB Infra*
- *María Luisa Domínguez, Director for Strategic Plans, ADIF*

A paper summarising contributions DG MOVE had received from stakeholders regarding rail priorities for the next mandate had been circulated with the meeting documents.

Sandro Santamato introduced the discussion topics:

Green Deal, what needs to be done?

- There is a paradox: results of the last EU elections can be considered as a backlash against the EU Green Deal; on the other hand, IMs see that demand for rail is increasing (both from passengers, freight, and political demand). The Green Deal remains an important objective (to achieve climate

targets, reduce congestion, etc.). The main issue for the coming years is the deployment of the regulatory framework enacted under the current legislature. IMs do not like uncertainty and need legal stability and predictability for investments. Another requirement for IMs is technical stability, an important topic of the Madrid plenary on ERTMS.

- The main challenge for IMs is to create more capacity and allocate it more efficiently. This is an issue of processes and tools, but also of investments as maintenance and renewal backlog have to be tackled. Also a digitalisation issue. For RUs and new entrants, rolling stock is the main issue to enter the market rapidly.
- The Green Deal focuses a lot on climate change *mitigation*, but not that much on *adaptation* because it sometimes regarded a lack of willingness to promote mitigation. It is however important to know how to adapt. Important question to address: is adaptation a national issue, or a European issue PRIME already has a taskforce on adaptation to climate change, and this is important to discuss at EU level.
- EIM pointed to the need to consider energy efficiency. Rail important solution because of its energy efficiency. We need to consistently promote the most energy efficient solutions.
- Other speakers highlighted the need for smart energy grids; the need for stable supply chains to deploy certain technologies which are essential elements of the Green Deal; the need to foster multi-modality by improving connections between modes.

Affordability - Per capita expenditure on rail continues to grow. What can be done to reduce the cost of rail?

- Prorail highlighted that productivity and design for lower costs are important concepts. Productivity in NL is reduced because of safety rules and because of low productivity of night shifts.
Design for lower cost: we never assessed TSIs in terms of the cost of ownership of assets for railways. This shows a completely different approach from other transport sectors such as automotive, where there is a much stronger focus on lowering costs. We should also work with off-the-shelf products, and not tailor-made products which are more expensive (e.g. FRMCS).
- ADIF pointed out that doing infrastructure works during the day would be cheaper but means cutting down on the offer of services.
- COM absolutely agrees with the need to design for lower cost. ERJU includes a work programme about low-cost railways. On TSIs, the real problem is when we get a mix of TSIs and national rules, this increases costs a lot.
- CER highlighted the need for impact assessments for TSIs, as well as their proposal to have a programme manager in the Commission for ERTMS.

Resilience – What needs to be done at EU level?

- Common problems in various EU countries, strong wildfires and flooding. Important to learn from each other. ADIF has developed a climate change risk map highlighting the main problem areas for wildfires and floods, which informs infrastructure planning (building of new lines and adaptation of existing lines). Important to do more preventive maintenance and exchange between MSs on solutions.
- Prorail pointed out railways takes more time to repair than highways, because railway tracks need to be laid precisely.

Innovation – What should be areas of focus?

- Technical innovations (DAC, ERTMS...) must be aligned on strategic and business problems, such as the lack of capacity, of reliability, the supply chain, the circular economy, safety.
- Processes and strong governance are key. Important European projects like ERTMS have to be well governed to be implemented step by step and create a real change. Interlocking is a big subject for instance in Europe (for mid-sized IMs especially).
- Other speakers mentioned the risk of a consolidation of suppliers, and the need to develop models to share costs and savings that are derived from new technologies among the different actors of the rail system.

Infrastructure funding – Need to secure adequate budget, but also to prioritize. Which kind of

projects should EU spending be focused on to maximize effect? Can new resources be mobilized?

- Kristian Schmidt highlighted that Member States have an increased public debt, so it is unrealistic to count on extra funding. Discussions on efficiency gains are important, including energy efficiency. An important key to efficiency is competition, IMs should find ways to support market opening in rail.

5. KPIs and Benchmarking

- Presentation of the work of the subgroup KPI and benchmarking and main findings of the external KPI and benchmarking report, *Raymond Geurts van Kessel, ProRail, Jude Carey, Irish Rail*
- Raymond Geurts van Kessel presented key findings from the 7th PRIME KPI report. The group has progressively expanded the scope, introducing elements on the state of the asset and on the environment, in a step-by-step approach.
- IMs agreed with the publication of the report.
- AQ announced the intention to discuss in more depth what we can learn from the results over a longer period of time and whether the data we collect meets our needs or would need to cover other or additional aspects. This will be the topic for a strategic discussion at the PRIME Plenary in November in Vienna. Ahead of this, there will be a workshop in Paris, in October, open to the subgroup participants, to PRIME coordinators and to academia to work on the learning and possible next steps.
- Proposal on the launch of a new deep dive study on performance management to prepare for tasks under the future capacity regulation – *Raymond Geurts van Kessel, ProRail, Jude Carey, Irish Rail*
- AQ explained that under the draft regulation, ENIM will be expected to establish a European framework for performance review, which should include performance indicators, methodologies and data requirements, and to develop an annual European performance review report. These indicators are altogether a very different set from what is collected today via the PRIME KPI Report or RMMS. The new obligations under the draft Regulation should not stop work with the benchmarking reports. However, new deep dive study could be launched to investigate how to address new tasks. RNE already collects some data today, so they will be closely involved. Similarly, ERA also collects data today feeding its fact sheets and monitors the implementation of telematics applications and plan would be to involve ERA in this work.
- Jude Carey explained the scope of the planned deep dive study.
- IMs agreed to the launch of the deep dive study on performance management.

6. Capacity management

- Update on negotiations on the draft Regulation on better use of rail infrastructure capacity; *Sandro Santamato, Head of Unit, Single European Rail Area*
- Update on the negotiations on the draft regulation, highlighting concerns about Member States' wish to be able to issue binding guidelines to IMs. The timely implementation of the capacity regulation will only work if IMs prepare well and are committed to delivering on time. In this context, DG MOVE is concerned about delays in the ongoing CEF project of on digital capacity management. Obviously, in such situation it is also much harder to argue in favour of possible follow-on grants.
- Update on the work of the PRIME taskforce capacity management to prepare PRIME/ENIM for tasks under the future Regulation: *Alfred Pitnik, OeBB Infra, Linda Thulin, Trafikverket*
- Alfred Pitnik and Linda Thulin presented the discussions of the taskforce on capacity

management, focused on the future structure of ENIM and its relationship with the network coordinator. Final recommendations will be presented to the PRIME Plenary in November.

- Activities of RNE to prepare network coordinator tasks under the future Regulation *Joachim Kroll, Secretary General, RailNetEurope*
- Joachim Kroll presented RNE's project to prepare for future tasks of the network coordinator. He highlighted the need to ensure good coordination between the ongoing work of RNE and that of PRIME to avoid inefficiencies.

- **Q&A:.**

- Concerns were expressed over the Council General Approach, which risks leading to more fragmentation of the market, as well as over application dates and the timing gap between the repeal of the rail freight corridors and the full application of the future regulation.
- Appreciation was expressed for the degree of freedom the Commission proposal leaves to IMs, in particular when compared to the more stringent provisions proposed by EP (making the frameworks binding through implementing acts).
- Several IMs mentioned the need to adapt the outcome of discussions of the taskforce and of RNE's work to the final outcome of the legislative process once trilogues have concluded.

7. Charging

- Presentation of the work of the subgroup: *Maria Alvarez Cuadrado, ADIF, Vincenzo Carpinelli, DG MOVE*
- AQ highlighted the sensitivity of charging issues for IMs. The work done in the subgroup has fed and will feed the upcoming guidelines on Track Access Charges which the Commission is working on.
- Vincenzo Carpinelli presented the work of the subgroup. CER drew attention to the recent establishment of a sub-group of SERAF on commercial conditions and the possible need for coordination between the two sub-groups.

8. Digitalisation

- Presentation of the work of the subgroup: *Harald Reisinger, RailNetEurope, Keir Fitch, DG MOVE*
- The subgroup chairs presented the work of their group. Keir Fitch underlined the importance of ensuring coherence between the work of RNE and that of COM, ERA and the ERJU. The Telematics TSI is under active development, will ensure exchange of data across the various systems (traffic management, ticketing, etc.). There needs to be more willingness to use data in rail. There is also important ongoing work on RINF; in last year's TSI package, there was a long list of amendments amending/expanding the scope of RINF. The newly adopted work programme of ERA includes important work on communications between train drivers and control centres.
- With regard to funding, Harald Reisinger (RNE) pointed to the need for better coordination between IMs.

9. Other business

- Next Plenary will be in Vienna on 28 November, with a strategic discussion on learnings from the PRIME benchmarking and findings of the taskforce to prepare ENIM for tasks under the new capacity regulation.