

Commentary on Regulation (EU) No 913/2010

The objective

The European Union aspires to increase the competitiveness of international freight traffic by rail and to increase rail's market share. The European Union considers this is essential to achieve the objectives of the 2011 White Paper¹. Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 'concerning a European rail network for competitive freight' has been enacted to work towards this objective. Switzerland also has an interest in working with these corridors and in promoting the transfer of freight traffic to rail.

The EU has defined nine European freight corridors. Of those, two run across Swiss territory:

- the Rhine-Alpine-Corridor: Zeebrugge/Antwerp/Amsterdam/Rotterdam – Cologne – Basel – Gotthard/Lötschberg - Simplon – Milan – Genoa
- and
- the North Sea-Mediterranean Corridor: Rotterdam/Antwerp/Dunkerque/Lille/Liège/Paris – Luxembourg – Metz – Basel/Dijon – Lyon



¹ White paper "Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system". Brussels 28 March 2011, COM(2011) 144.

Attractive transit times, train paths reserved for international freight traffic and enhanced reliability within the planning process and in the execution of the plan will provide international freight traffic with the high quality customers insist on. Hence the international train path offer will be aligned more closely with the requirements of the market than it has been hitherto and application for train paths simplified. The majority of corridors (and therefore those that involve Switzerland) had to comply with the requirements of the EU regulation by November 2013.

Organisation

Not only must the infrastructure managers and allocation bodies work more closely together than before and work more closely with railway undertakings to increase the competitiveness of international freight traffic by rail but the ministries of transport of the states taking part in the corridors must also be involved. The attractiveness of the freight corridors depends not only on the quality of the paths themselves and the efficiency of the allocation process but also on the framework within which they are allocated; a framework which it is to be hoped is as harmonised as possible.

Each freight corridor will therefore be directed by an executive board (in which states and ministries will be represented) and a management board (in which infrastructure managers and allocation bodies will be represented). So that the path offer meets requirements and is attractive, railway undertakings and terminal operators will be able to make an input by means of advisory groups.

Attractive path offers

Infrastructure managers and allocation bodies taking part in freight corridors are preparing joint international path offers for freight traffic. These are aligned with market requirements which in turn are to be determined by a transport market study which will be updated periodically. The market study must also take the capacity requirements of other traffics, including passenger traffic, into account. Railway undertakings will have the opportunity to express their views on the planned paths in the advisory groups.

The pre-arranged path offers will be published annually before the beginning of the application process in a path catalogue. Having a path catalogue is nothing new for Switzerland. SBB, BLS and trasse.ch have produced path catalogues for freight traffic on the Gotthard and Simplon axes for some years. What is new, however, it is that these paths have a higher priority in path allocation and for operations.

One-stop-shop for applying for infrastructure capacity

The infrastructure managers and train path allocation bodies responsible for each corridor have set up a joint contact point for that corridor - a 'one-stop shop'. This makes it easier for railway undertakings and other applicants to apply for paths for international freight trains along the corridor. The corridor one-stop shop is responsible for the allocation of catalogued train paths along the corridors on behalf of the corridor infrastructure managers and train path allocation bodies. It also provides information to railway undertakings and third parties.

Railway undertakings and other applicants use the 'Path Coordination System (PCS)' (previously known as 'Pathfinder') as the tool to apply to the corridor one-stop shops for through paths. That is the way in which duplication in path allocation is avoided. Furthermore, that method simplifies the presentation and management of the paths which remain in the catalogue for allocation as ad-hoc paths during the year.

Mutually coordinated planning of investment

The Member States and infrastructure managers are required to coordinate their medium and long-term investment plans in the interests of the efficient use of resources and of avoiding bottlenecks. The investment plans jointly drafted by the infrastructure managers are required to be submitted to the relevant Executive Board (with the representatives of the ministers) for its approval.

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