

2.2 SMART-RAIL PROJECT

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1. INTRODUCTION



The key objective of the European Union Agency for Railways¹ is to devise a safe modern and integrated railway network that will become more competitive to other transport modes. In other words, it has to offer high-quality, end-to-end services without being limited by national borders or any other external or internal obstacles. In order to achieve this modal shift from road to rail, the rail sector needs to provide the capacity for affordable and attractive services for reasonable and competitive prices. At the same time the current European rail freight market represents a very complex system that geographically covers a vast area, encompasses many countries and involves various public as well as private players, such as rail operators, infrastructure managers (IM), terminal operators, railway undertakings (RU) and freight forwarders who manage to run trains from A to B. Therefore, a collaboration of all rail actors is needed in finding a good business model to achieve ERA's goal.

The Smart-Rail project is closely aligned with the objectives set by the European Commission's Joint Undertaking SHIFT2RAIL² and TEN-T corridors³ and it endeavours to come up with a realistic and competitive proposal to improve the current rail services proposed to shippers.

2. SMART-RAIL PROJECT

The Smart-Rail – “Smart Supply Chain Oriented Rail Freight Services”⁴ is a project funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 Programme, with a budget of €6m. It is a three year research and innovation action that was launched on 1st May 2015 and will continue until the end of April 2018.



ECG – the Association of European Vehicle Logistics⁵ became one of 19 partners of the Smart-Rail project consortium. The members of the consortium come from 11 different EU countries. The project brings together different sorts of stakeholders with various interests, i.e. private railway companies, research institutes, associations, logistics service providers, SMEs and consultancies to work together on targets defined by the project. The main role of ECG in the project is to provide valuable expertise from the FVL perspective and to involve interested members as potential stakeholders to participate in the project and benefit from its results.

2.1 Key objectives of the Smart-Rail project

The key goal of the Smart-Rail project is to improve rail freight services offered to shippers which will be done by contributing to a mental shift of the rail sector towards a client oriented and supply chain focus. The project intends to design methods to increase flexibility and co-operation within the rail sector itself and in relation to other stakeholders in the supply chain. The idea behind the project is to find the better ways to use the available capacity in rail. Likewise, utilisation of freight trains needs to be increased and lower prices achieved.

1 Following the entry into force of the technical pillar of the 4th EU Railway Package, the European Union Agency for Railways replaces and succeeds the European Railway Agency (ERA). www.era.europa.eu
2 www.shift2rail.org
3 http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t-guidelines/corridors/index_en.htm
4 www.smartrail-project.eu
5 www.ecgassociation.eu