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Working Party on Rail Transport
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**THE ROLE OF THE RAILWAYS IN THE PROMOTION
OF COMBINED TRANSPORT**

**Implementation of Directive 2001/16/EC of the European Parliament and of the
Council on the interoperability of the trans-European conventional rail system**

Transmitted by the European Communities

Introduction

In accordance with the Treaty establishing the European Community (arts. 154 and 155), the Community contributes to the establishment and development of trans-European networks in the transport sector. In order to achieve these objectives, the Community implements all actions which may be necessary to ensure the interoperability of the networks, particularly with reference to the harmonization of technical standards.

As regards the railway sector, a first measure was taken by the Council on 23 July 1996 with the adoption of Directive 96/48/EC on the interoperability of the trans-European high-speed rail system.

In order to achieve the objectives of this Directive, drafts of technical specifications for interoperability (TSIs) are being drawn up by the European Association for Railway Interoperability (AEIF) which acts as the joint representative body defined in the Directive, grouping representatives of infrastructure managers, railway companies and industry.

The TSI projects received a favourable opinion from the Committee established in accordance with article 21 of Directive 96/48/EC. Their adoption in the form of a Commission decision is scheduled in the course of the month of May and their publication in the Official Journal of the European Communities will follow. As from the entry into force of the TSIs, all new high-speed lines and all lines upgraded for high speed must be constructed in accordance with the new interoperability standard.

A programme for the development of corresponding European standards was initiated in 1998 and is regularly updated on the basis of the work of preparation of the TSIs.

State of work on the interoperability of the conventional trans-European rail network

Directive 2001/16/EC on the interoperability of the trans-European conventional rail system, adopted on 19 March 2001, like the Directive on high speed, introduces Community procedures for the preparation and adoption of TSIs, and common rules for assessing conformity with these specifications.

The Directive requires the adoption of a first group of priority TSIs within three years, i.e. in 2004, in the following areas: control/command and signalling; telematics applications for freight services; traffic operation and management (including staff qualifications for cross-border services); freight wagons; noise problems deriving from rolling stock and infrastructure.

Six months after the publication of the Directive, the Commission obtained a favourable opinion from the Committee on the **first programme of work**, on the appointment of AEIF as the **Joint Representative Body**, and on AEIF's **mandate for the development of the first group of TSIs**.

On the basis of its mandate, AEIF established the necessary structure and working groups for the drafting of the TSI projects; more than 240 experts from the Union and candidate countries will take part in this important task which, because of the deadline imposed by the Directive, is proving to be a considerable challenge.

In order to face up to the challenge, a new tool is necessary: this is the **architecture representative of the conventional rail system**. The development of this tool began in 2001 with a very detailed functional analysis of the entire system, which should now be presented using a formal method of representation which will reveal not only the various components and the links through which they are incorporated into the system, but also the conditions which must exist for each of these links. It will be possible for the tool to be used not only by the groups preparing the TSI projects, to ensure the consistency and exhaustive nature of their specifications, but also as a scientifically reliable proof of the safety of the specifications.

Another tool being developed is the **legislative reference system for the transitional period**, referred to in article 25 of Directive 2001/16/EC. This reference system will be useful for the period preceding the adoption of all the TSIs, which may prove to be relatively long depending on the difficulties encountered and the resources available, whether human or financial. Its construction takes into account the specifications already used in international traffic, and the technical rules notified by Member States in the context of article 16, paragraph 3, and article 10, paragraph 5, of the Directive.

The tools for **cost benefit analysis** as provided for in the Directive are also the subject of preparatory work, both with reference to the methodology to be used or the files which must be constructed to describe infrastructures, rolling stock and traffic, if the economic analysis is to be based on real and specific scenarios.

The Directive also provides - and this is a new provision compared with the high-speed Directive - **for consultation of the organizations representing the customers on the one hand, and the social partners on the other**. In order to prepare for these consultations, a list of the organizations to be consulted has been drawn up, along with a protocol of agreement between AEIF and the Sectoral Dialogue Committees established in the context of Commission decision No. 98/500/EC.

Future work

Now that the first group of priority TSIs is being developed, the Commission is envisaging mandating AEIF for the development of a new group of TSIs.

The subjects considered at present time as being of high priority are:

- safety in rail tunnels;
- air pollution;
- accessibility to persons with reduced mobility.

This new mandate is being discussed with the Member States within the Committee.

Conclusion

The Commission is making every effort to ensure that the deadline scheduled by the Directive for the adoption of the first group of TSIs is met. This deadline is a real challenge in view of the difficulties relating to technical harmonization which are more considerable than in the case of high speed, but also because of the additional provisions such as the consultation of the social partners. An additional challenge consists of taking account of technical differences vis-à-vis the networks of candidate countries to the expanded Union without waiting for their formal accession. This would make it possible to ensure that a TSI adopted in relation to interoperability will not cause additional differences when the expansion takes place although an increase in the volume to be transported, particularly as regards freight, is foreseen, along the East-West axis.

For more information

Railway policy and interoperability:

http://europe.eu.int/comm/transport/rail/index_en.html

Work of the committee on interoperability:

<http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/tren/Home/main>

Work of AEIF:

<http://www.aeif.org/>
