

Position Paper

Shift2Rail



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Introduction

The European Union's goal of creating a Single European Railway Area in order to achieve a more competitive and resource-efficient transport system requires investments into research and development. The European Commission proposes to tackle this challenge by the creation of the Shift2Rail Joint Technology Initiative.

European large scale innovation and research program with a system-wide approach will cause a radical movement towards the creation of an interoperable and safe European railway system. As the research undertaken under Shift2Rail program is expected to contribute towards European standardisation, European Rail Infrastructure Managers (EIM) recognises this opportunity for increased interoperability in Europe.

The European rail sector needs to become more innovative in order to foster the full potential of railways in the overall transport system. The environmental challenges and the diversified national systems mean that the pace of change of the European railways needs to accelerate.

Focused investment in railway research for an improved customer experience is essential and time critical. The European railway transport system has to respond to market demands: an improved customer experience both for passengers and freight is the key to success.

Potential for improvement to the regulation concerning Shift2Rail

While EIM recognises that the timelines for the Shift2Rail regulation are tight and should not be delayed by unnecessary revision, this does not mean there is no room for improvement. EIM finds that there could be an enhancement to the finalised regulation by looking at the following key areas in financial rules, Shift2Rail outputs and Technical Specification for Interoperability (TSI) open points.

The regulations concerning the financial rules are currently unclear. The financial rules for Founding and Associate Members must be clearly defined in the regulation in order to demonstrate transparency and fairness between different members.

The regulation must include clear points defining the financial responsibility of Associate Members and Founding Members.

The results from the Shift2Rail process affect the entire railway community, with far reaching effects on TSIs and also other aspects of the railways. In addition, the European

Union is funding 450 million Euros in the process, for the overall benefit of the Union. The entire industry can therefore be considered a stakeholder in this process and so it is important that the project results are integrated in a systematic way so as to minimise possible negative impacts on these stakeholders.

All members in Shift2Rail must have access to the results from the Shift2Rail, so that they may be able to implement them in their own systems. This will encourage financial backing for Shift2Rail as the programme progresses from throughout the sector and strengthen the Shift2Rail initiative as a whole. This is why EIM supports the fact that Shift2Rail is managed under the Horizon 2020 framework programme, with the corresponding rules on intellectual property.

EIM believes it should be clear that all members in Shift2Rail will be included in the results from the programme.

Part of the Shift2Rail process is aimed at closing the open points in TSIs in order to enhance safety and interoperability across the EU. This has been a process so far managed by the European Rail Agency, which has well adapted processes to include the entire railway sector in its recommendations. ERA should maintain this responsibility, and should be an observer to the Shift2Rail programme, allowing the outputs from the Shift2Rail research to be fed into the work that ERA is already managing.

EIM believes that it should be clear that ERA will manage the closure of open points and maintenance of TSIs independently, and this is something on which Shift2Rail can offer research support.

Shift2Rail is needed now for the benefit of the European railways

The Shift2Rail initiative will enable and improve research relationships and improve research cooperation at many levels within the railway sector and academia. This in itself will foster improved efficiency and performance of the railway transport system by identification of synergistic opportunities.

The potential Shift2Rail innovations for improved IT capabilities, infrastructure performance, rolling stock and other parts of the railway system are required for a far more competitive and even safer European railway system.

EIM underline the need for Shift2Rail to take account of the geographical and technical diversity of the European rail system, thus reinforcing the regional dimension of transport policy. In this respect, the territorial and transnational dimensions should be strengthened by the innovations achieved via the Shift2Rail program.

EIM has keenly monitored the development of the Shift2Rail proposal and a number of EIM members have been engaged in the development of the Shift2Rail proposal from the outset. This engagement has been beneficial for the development of the wider railway participation and ultimately the final work plan for Shift2Rail.

EIM is aware that the timescales to achieve the approval of the Council of the European Union before the next round of European elections is very short. EIM is therefore concerned that any delay in the approval process could result in very significant delay in the start of Shift2Rail. This would result in lost funding and lack of progress to improve the performance of the railway sector.

EIM therefore believes that it is essential that the regulation proceeds without delay during this parliamentary term. It recognises that whilst documentary typographic and factual errors must be corrected during the regulation review phase, there is insufficient time for any detailed changes and the risk of delay outweighs any marginal benefits there might be in revision of the proposed regulation.

EIM emphasises that any delay in the approval process of Shift2Rail will work against the competitiveness of the European railways.

Conclusion

Shift2Rail will enable the railway sector to make significant progress in meeting the challenges of the Transport White paper. Railways will be able to offer yet further improvements in safety, interoperability, significantly increased capacity and improved services as a result. All this is envisaged to happen whilst reducing costs and failures.

EIM fully supports the European Commission initiative to create the Shift2Rail Joint Technology Initiative, despite some suggestions to the final regulation. It is willing to work with the Shift2Rail partners to develop and support the initiative to a successful conclusion. Shift2rail is needed now.