



UIC's work on improving capacity of the railway system: official launch and General Assembly of the European Capacity4Rail Project, 16 October 2013, Paris, UIC HQ

(Paris, UIC HQ, 16 October 2013) The Capacity4Rail project, co-funded by the European Commission and addressing the issue of railway capacity, held its kick-off meeting today in Paris, in the presence of around 70 participants representing 46 European partners from 13 countries in Europe and Turkey. The consortium features a good balance between sector activities, and significant support from academies and universities.

This four-year project (from October 2013 to 30 September 2017) will produce 65 deliverables, including technical reports and demonstrators. Following the White Paper on European Transport published in 2011, Capacity4Rail proposes to bring a system vision of the railways looking towards 2030/2050, by proposing guidelines for future deployments in the mid-term, recommendations for technologies to developed and deployed in the long-term to obtain an affordable, adaptable, automated, resilient and high-capacity railway.

There are currently 28 projects in which the UIC team is involved. UIC is the Coordinator of six of them (RIVAS, MAINLINE, RESTRAIL, SATLOC, FOSTER and the recently approved CAPACITY4RAIL). The EU projects carried out by the UIC are mainly part of the 7th Framework Programme (FP7).

Mr Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director General, gave the welcome address, explaining UIC's increasingly important role in European Projects. UIC has been progressively recognised as a professional platform and a reliable contributor on behalf of its members, especially with regard to technical/research issues that benefit their interests. He emphasised the key role of coordination in this project that is a big challenge, given the large number of partners. In a complex and diversified world, there is a need for unity in the shape of a platform able to bring together various partners, and this is the basis of UIC.

Laurent Schmitt, Project Coordinator at UIC, presented the project's background. Capacity is not only a railway issue, all modes of transports are facing capacity issues and share common constraints; therefore there is a need for complementarity and balanced split between them. There is also political will and an expectation from customers and public in favour of technical solutions for a better performing railway. There are different ways to address the issue: more resources and infrastructures, more efficient use of existing resources, improved performance of existing resources and reduction of capacity-killers, making the system more resilient and resistant, more reliable and available for operation.

The project will build on various past and ongoing research projects (for example the input of INNOTRACK for switches and crossings for future railways). The project will be structured into four Sub-Projects related to infrastructure: freight, operation, and advanced monitoring. A 5th transversal Sub-Project will give the project a system view and ensure the connection between the other Sub-Projects. The full sustainability of the developed solutions and innovations will be assessed and scenarios for a smooth migration of the system from its current to its future state will be evaluated.

The project challenges will concern the use of the existing know-how, the implementation of the result, the need to find timely low cost ways to add capacity, the rapid implementability at minimal cost. The coordination is of vital importance, to create an open and creative atmosphere, and to keep a multi-disciplinary system approach.

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At the end of the FP7 programme that has been running for seven years from 2007 until 2013, UIC is ready to commit itself, for the benefit of its members and the whole railway community, to the incoming projects to be started within Europe 2020.

As a reminder, the FP7 bundles all research-related EU initiatives together under a common roof playing a crucial role in reaching the goals of growth, competitiveness and employment. The broad objectives of FP7 are to promote and encourage the creation of European poles of (scientific) excellence. In addition to national research programmes, activities funded in FP7 must have a "European added value". In comparison, the Europe 2020 announced priority will be a smart and sustainable economy integrating employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy, all these fields gathered under the umbrella of a strong and effective system of economic governance.