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Study on Long and/or Heavy Trains undertaken for UIC now completed

(Paris, 31 January 2013) The study on Long and/or Heavy Trains (L&HT), a result of research and work prepared for the International Union of Railways (UIC) by PANTEIA/NEA, with the help of RAILISTICS, has been completed.

The main aims of the study were to:

- Create a snapshot of existing long and/or heavy train operations across the world
- Assess the technical and operational challenges encountered
- Provide recommendations for their implementation on both European and international corridors

Rail freight operators are constantly seeking to increase productivity and freight volumes, and to make gains in terms of their relative production costs in order to offer a quality service to shippers and their customers. In this study UIC highlights the advantages of this technique through:

- Improving rail infrastructure capacity
- Optimising the use of wagons
- Improving labour productivity
- Reducing rail operating costs and energy consumption

The scope of the study focuses on trains that are over 3,500 tonnes in weight and/or 750 m in length. Special focus has been given to rail networks with mixed passenger and freight traffic, broken down across the different geographical regions of UIC.

The data collected from the study have been aggregated for Europe (Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg and France), Russia, China, India, Australia, South Africa, Brazil and North America (USA and Canada).

The study also assesses the impact of these trains and carries out a cost-benefit analysis for the various transport corridors. The results of the analysis reveal that the impact of these trains on the European corridors examined could contribute to an increase in tonnage capacity of 15 – 31% for long trains and almost 39% for heavy trains. The operating costs per tonne could also be cut by 8% for heavy trains and by 30 – 45% for long trains.

The study's conclusions and recommendations highlight the difficulty of transferring and replicating the good practices found on other continents. They indicate that investing in infrastructure, rolling stock and IT support for these types of train results in an increase in their length and capacity, whilst lowering unit costs.

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