

INFO LETTER

NEWS FOR THE FREIGHT WAGON INDUSTRY



IN FOCUS: CHANGE AS AN OPPORTUNITY

Uncomfortable truths and new opportunities

Rail freight transport is currently facing a challenging situation. At the same time, we are convinced that complaining won't help, and that change always brings opportunities too. **Malte Lawrenz** (Chairman of VPI Germany), **Frank Petutschnig** (Secretary General of VPI Austria) and **Simon Wey** (Managing Director of VAP Switzerland) answer some slightly unusual questions in a cross-border interview.

What is the biggest lie that the rail freight transport industry has been telling itself for years?

MALTE LAWRENZ I don't think anyone is lying. But I do believe that sometimes, the best outcomes for the market and the economy do not correspond to the reality of political regulation. This is currently making the development of this mode of transport more complicated.

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG I generally agree with Malte. I would also like to share a mantra that I hear time and again in our sector: "We can carry on as before." We hear remarks like that all the time, but I believe that change is necessary to make sure that the freight transport sector can continue to evolve.

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Dear readers,

There is no point sugar-coating the issue. Rail freight transport is under pressure: costs are too high, there is a lack of planning security, the sector is overly regulated and, in many areas, the pace is too slow. Anyone who thinks we can carry on as before risks exactly what nobody wants: an even greater shift to road transport.

That is precisely why this issue of our infoletter is more than just a review of the current situation. It is a plea for action. We need reliable infrastructure, practical rules, solutions designed for the whole of Europe, and the courage to finally tackle unresolved issues. Not at some point in the future. Today.

At the same time, this infoletter shows what the industry is capable of. Workshops are investing in technology and expertise. Planzer is demonstrating how rail transport can be consistently used for major journeys and intelligently combined with solutions for the last mile. And our partnerships in intermodal transport prove that growth occurs whenever reliability, flexibility and shared responsibility come together.

Change is therefore not just a buzzword. It is an obligation. Less administration, more impact. Fewer national reflexes, more international connectivity. Fewer announcements, better system performance. If we want to strengthen the railways, we need to shape the future – not just manage it.

Because one thing is clear: rail freight transport is not a marginal issue, nor is it a fallback solution or an optional extra. It is systematically important. And it can only grow stronger if we make it stronger now.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue.

Markus Vaerst
CEO

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SIMON WEY Politicians and the public are well aware of how essential rail freight transport is in Switzerland. I would call it a difference in perspective. Politicians assume that everything is going well and have not yet fully realised that in reality, we are heading for total decline in many areas. We in the industry need to change that.

How much could capacity or productivity in rail freight transport be increased by in the short term by optimising processes? As a percentage?

SIMON WEY There are all sorts of areas where improvements could be made. I'm referring to DAC or real-time data to improve efficiency, but also to all the regulations – just look at the recent FOT ruling following the SUST report in Switzerland. Regulations should always be targeted and based on evidence.

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG I believe that consistent digitalisation is the most important issue. And by that I mean the interfaces between all the parties involved: wagon keepers, RUs and infrastructure providers. To maximise productivity in this area, all the relevant stakeholders need to work together and act transparently.

MALTE LAWRENZ It would be irresponsible to predict short-term leaps in productivity or growth of 15 or 20 percent, especially as increases of this kind are always

linked to the economic climate. Rail traffic volumes have fallen in Germany. Once the economy picks up again, there will almost certainly be a boost in rail traffic again. And it is vital to ensure that track access charges don't rise uncontrollably, making rail unattractive as a mode of transport. We also need to keep an eye on the regulations imposed by certain authorities, and engage in proactive innovation.

Isn't it also a matter of providing customers with information that gives them a sense of reliability and planning security? In your opinion, what information do customers need?

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG The estimated time of arrival is a key piece of information for shippers, as it conditions a whole series of processes.

SIMON WEY I agree that this information is essential. Customers want to know when the wagons will be loaded, when they will arrive at their destination, and so on. Rail is in direct competition with road transport, which often remains more reliable. This shows how urgent it is for us to improve the reliability of rail transport. Unfor-



The estimated time of arrival is a key piece of information for shippers, as it conditions a whole series of processes.

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG



Photo: DUROX AB, Luleå, Schweden

unately, the current tendency is for goods to be transported by road.

MALTE LAWRENZ From what I gather from conversations with shippers and RUs, the current problem is linked to the provision of infrastructure data regarding corridor upgrades, construction work and diverted traffic. The tools are available; they just need to be used properly.

This means that many rail freight transporters are not yet able to plan ahead.

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG Not sufficiently, I would say. And it's not at all about making information and data available as quickly as possible. Planning uncertainty is often caused by missing or incorrect data.

MALTE LAWRENZ The problem isn't just digitalisation, but also the points, the tracks – all the hardware that

makes up the rail network. Until the hardware issue has been resolved properly, no data platform in the world will be of any use in helping us to move forward. Politicians in Germany have acknowledged this, but upgrading the infrastructure will take time.

SIMON WEY I would say that it's important to do one thing without neglecting the other. After all, without the hardware, everything else is, of course, useless.

Apart from infrastructure and digitalisation, do you think there is a regulation that, while well-intentioned, unnecessarily slows down rail freight transport?

MALTE LAWRENZ Planning approval procedures.

SIMON WEY In Switzerland, it's the latest FOT ruling. The intention is good, but it goes much too far, which means that it significantly reduces the competitiveness of rail freight transport unnecessarily. There is a risk of a massive shift to road traffic, and we will have gained absolutely nothing in terms of safety. When it comes to safety, I would welcome a more holistic approach that considers rail and road transport together.

VPI – Verband der Privatgüterwagen-Interessenten Österreichs (Austrian Association of Private Wagon Keepers)

The association represents the interests of independent wagon keepers in the Austrian rail freight transport sector. It is committed to establishing the best possible framework conditions and increasing the volume of freight transport by rail, both nationally and internationally.

vpirail.at



Although infrastructure managers generally operate at national level, representatives of the Austrian and German infrastructure sectors are actively participating in a working group to develop alternative solutions for the sector. This should set a precedent. We should adopt a more international approach.

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG





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MALTE LAWRENZ

VPI – Verband der Güterwaghalter in Deutschland e. V. (German Association of Wagon Keepers)

Industry association for private keepers of freight wagons and workshops in Germany that ensures good technical, legal and operational framework conditions in rail freight transport and offers sustainable and economical solutions to promote the growth of the railway sector.

vpihamburg.de

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG Incidentally, as a result of the FOT ruling, the national federations were required to inform their respective ministries of the consequences of unilateral action in order to persuade them to adopt a European approach. That is one of the consequences. But I'd like to give another positive example: in Germany, the closure of the Nuremberg–Passau route is having far-reaching consequences for Austrian companies as well, given that they are major suppliers of the (southern) German automotive industry, for instance. Although infrastructure managers generally operate at national level, representatives of the Austrian and German infrastructure sectors are actively participating in a working group to develop alternative solutions for the sector. This should set a precedent. We should think more globally and make use of every available lever.

MALTE LAWRENZ Speaking from Germany, I can say that we are lobbying very actively and are in constant contact with the relevant authorities to ensure that these harmonised European rules are implemented and to prevent Germany from taking unilateral national action.

If you worked for the Ministry yourselves, what regulations would you abolish tomorrow?

MALTE LAWRENZ I would encourage less emphasis to be placed on national considerations and more attention to be paid to European harmonisation when making decisions.

SIMON WEY In addition, every newly introduced measure should undergo an impact assessment before it is implemented. Measures should always be targeted and have proven benefits. Authorities should be obliged to provide this evidence before a regulation comes into force.

Should a sunset clause be introduced alongside an impact clause, for example to review the effectiveness of regulations every three years?

SIMON WEY This should be done on an ongoing basis rather than at fixed intervals. And we should have the courage to scrap unnecessary regulations. However, as it has been shown that deregulation is virtually impossible, the main priority should be to ensure that new regulations are only introduced when absolutely necessary.



Rail is in direct competition with road transport, which often remains more reliable. That shows how urgent it is for us to improve the reliability of rail transport. Unfortunately, the current tendency is for goods to be transported by road.

SIMON WEY



VAP – Verband der verladenden Wirtschaft (Schweiz) (Swiss Association of Shippers)

The VAP represents around 300 companies from the shippers' and logistics industry in Switzerland and neighbouring countries. It promotes rail freight transport, optimises the framework conditions for infrastructure and logistics, and advocates for a competitive Swiss rail freight system.

cargorail.ch

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG It certainly makes sense to evaluate the effectiveness of laws after a certain period of time.

When a shipper asks why they should reserve rail transport today, what do you say in response?

MALTE LAWRENZ It is safer, more sustainable and in the spirit of our times.

SIMON WEY And it makes more efficient use of resources because it takes up much less space. Plus it is more environmentally friendly. Rail transport offers a number of economic benefits, so policymakers, in particular, should have a strong interest in promoting rail freight transport.

MALTE LAWRENZ That's right. And if you look at the bigger picture rather than just focusing on the cost per

kilometre, you really have no choice but to opt for rail. That's if you take into account the CO₂ footprint, safety concerns, congestion on the roads, and so on. And I believe that large shippers also have a social responsibility to fulfil.

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG I agree. Under European regulations, we, the European economies, will have to pay substantial penalties in the future for failing to meet the EU's climate targets by 2030. This should be factored into the long-term assessment.

SIMON WEY It is also important to take a holistic view. The structure of the performance-related heavy vehicle fee (LSVA)* should be included in the debate, for example. This is because the cost of road use has a direct impact on the competitiveness of rail transport.

MALTE LAWRENZ The fact is that decisive action is crucial. Across Europe, and particularly in Germany, we need to recognise that tolls can act as an incentive. In my view, not enough is being done at the moment. We have seen a massive surge in rail track access charges, but through lobbying, we have been able to limit the price increase to 16 percent. If costs continue to spiral out of control, rail freight transport will find itself in a very difficult position. Fortunately, politicians have realised this.

Better framework conditions for rail transport are one thing – but we need to do our bit as well.

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG Absolutely. We need to influence the framework conditions, but we can't be sure that this will be possible, so we must also become more efficient within the sector itself.

MALTE LAWRENZ Again, we need to do one thing without neglecting the other. But unless Germany's infrastructure makes significant strides towards greater resilience and robustness – and towards modern digitalisation – there is no point in discussing increasing the railways' share of the modal split in Germany.

We've already talked about financing and digitalisation. How could the implementation of the Digital Automatic Coupler (DAC) be financed? And don't say that the state will have to foot the bill. That's not the solution.

MALTE LAWRENZ Yes, it is the solution. When the CEO of a wagon keeper company looks at the costs of a DAC, he doesn't need a calculator to see that it's not financially viable. Yet it is an innovative system that will benefit the economy and the countries concerned, and that will significantly promote rail freight transport as a whole. The costs should not be borne solely by wagon keepers or RUs. There needs to be a substantial amount of funding; otherwise, I don't see any chance of it succeeding.

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG I would like to suggest an alternative possibility for financing. In the software sector, there is the option of "Software as a Service". The alternative would be to offer "DAC as a Service". In other words, leasing the functions instead of purchasing the hardware. A consortium consisting of manufacturers, leasing companies and workshops could take on financial and technical responsibility, while the wagon keepers would pay a monthly usage fee per wagon – linked to availability and performance. I believe that could really work.

SIMON WEY I tend to agree with Malte, but I do find what Frank said interesting. And I also think we should keep our eyes open and see who else might be able to provide funding. But the problem with the DAC is that the people who have to make the investment won't be the ones who will benefit from the added value in the future.

MALTE LAWRENZ I'm a bit sceptical about "DAC as a Service" because it would increase costs for users in the rail freight transport system. We're talking about improving the system. We don't want to pass on the costs to wagon keepers and RUs, only to end up in a less competitive situation. I'd like to make one more point on this subject: Pioneer DAC Trains are a crucial way to gain experience.

Finally, the cover story of this issue is entitled "Change as an Opportunity": do you believe that?

FRANK PETUTSCHNIG Yes, provided it isn't just a buzzword, but a real commitment to change. In other words, we need to shape things rather than just manage them.

SIMON WEY Yes, we must see change as an opportunity, because standing still means falling behind.

MALTE LAWRENZ Things will change, and opportunities will arise as a result. After all, rail freight transport isn't going to disappear. It will always have a bright future, even if things are a bit difficult at the moment. Sooner or later, the practical realities will prevail, because we simply can't manage without rail freight transport.

SIMON WEY Rail freight transport is systemically important. Without rail freight transport, the road infrastructure will collapse in the foreseeable future.

MALTE LAWRENZ That's a fitting conclusion. ●



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MALTE LAWRENZ

* The LSVA (performance-related heavy vehicle fee) is a tax levied in Switzerland based on the kilometres driven, the total vehicle weight and emission levels.



The Digital Automatic Coupler (DAC) is a key innovation in European rail freight transport. Who will fund the retrofit?
(Image: Knorr-Bremse DAC)

Let's tackle reforms together now

Rail freight transport is under considerable economic pressure. In particular, rising costs and limited network availability are putting a strain on operations and limiting planning security for many RUs. The following article examines the current situation and highlights the need for reform.



JAN ELFENDORST
Managing Director
EP Cargo Deutschland GmbH

The situation facing many railway undertakings in the rail freight transport sector has deteriorated significantly in recent years. More and more businesses are operating at a loss. Operational costs have risen by up to 30 percent in some cases, particularly due to construction work, traffic diversions, unmanned signal boxes and poor service quality. At the same time, costs are rising faster than revenue. This development jeopardises the overall viability of rail freight transport.

Network upgrades place a strain on operations and customers

The crucial modernisation work currently being carried out on the rail network is having a particularly high impact. Major capacity bottlenecks are being caused by corridor renovations and short-term construction work – and communication about these measures is often inadequate. Added to this, there is chronic understaffing of signal boxes. This is making timetables unreliable, and the additional costs have to be borne by railway undertakings and shippers. These framework conditions are encouraging a shift in transport volumes back to the road network. We, as representatives of RUs, are offering as much support as possible and making suggestions for improvement – but unfortunately, our ideas are rarely taken on board.

Indispensable reform of the track access charge system

The rise in track access charges also represents an ever-increasing burden. There is a risk of another price shock this year. Track access charges could rise by 37 percent by the end of 2026. The lack of planning security is particularly problematic for RUs and, above all, for customers. The confusion surrounding track access charges has made many customer discussions extremely difficult and underlines just how hard it is to form stable business relationships under these circumstances.

Given this situation, a fundamental reform of track access charges is deemed essential. Pricing should follow a growth-based marginal cost system, ideally starting at around two euros per kilometre of track. We need an intermodal level playing field throughout Europe, as well as price stability for several years at a time and direct financing of infrastructure through pooled public funds. This is the only way to restore investment confidence in the industry.

Efficiency hampered by over-regulation

As well as infrastructure and costs, ever-increasing regulation also remains a major obstacle, even though all stakeholders agree that administration and red tape must be reduced. Every rail transport journey generates more paperwork than any other mode of transport.

This complexity must be significantly reduced. Simplified approval procedures, practical regulations for safety certificates, fewer duplicate submissions to authorities and streamlined processes are crucial for achieving this. We have been discussing the harmonisation of technology and language for years. But we want to take action, not just talk about it.



Despite the difficult framework conditions, it is clear that the opening of the market is having a lasting positive effect.

JAN ELFENDORST

Growth driven by competitive railways

Despite the difficult framework conditions, it is clear that the opening of the market is having a lasting positive effect. For years, the growth in rail freight transport volumes has been driven primarily by competitive railways. The key factors are customer focus, professional expertise, cooperation and entrepreneurial perseverance. It is not concepts or presentations that will attract traffic to the railways, but specific, practical solutions for shippers.

Sustainable rail freight transport

To improve the situation, we need to adopt a shared vision for the future of rail freight transport. It is vital for

EP Cargo Deutschland GmbH

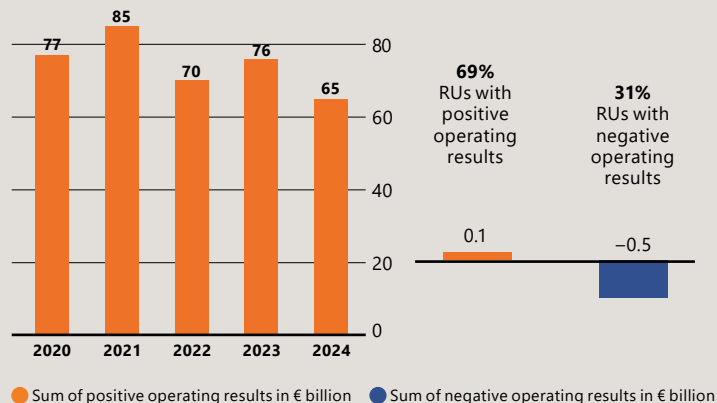
EP Cargo Deutschland GmbH in Berlin is one of six German rail logistics companies within the EP Logistics Group, which is headquartered in Prague. It provides rail freight services and multimodal solutions for domestic and cross-border transport.

epcargo.cz/en

all stakeholders – shippers, railway undertakings, politicians and industry associations – to work together on this vision. We must endeavour to make international rail freight transport simpler and more seamless to improve both the flow of information and day-to-day operations. Digitalisation and automation should be consistently geared towards two objectives: reducing costs and increasing customer benefit. At the same time, it is important to meet logistical needs even more effectively, regardless of whether transport takes place directly via sidings or in combination with other modes of transport. Many shippers would like to switch to rail, but are unsure how to go about it. This shows that providing customers with more comprehensive advice, as well as modern training and professional development opportunities, is just as important as establishing reliable framework conditions. If this joint effort succeeds, it will not only stabilise rail freight transport, but also help to develop this mode of transport as a cornerstone of sus-

More and more RUs are operating at a loss

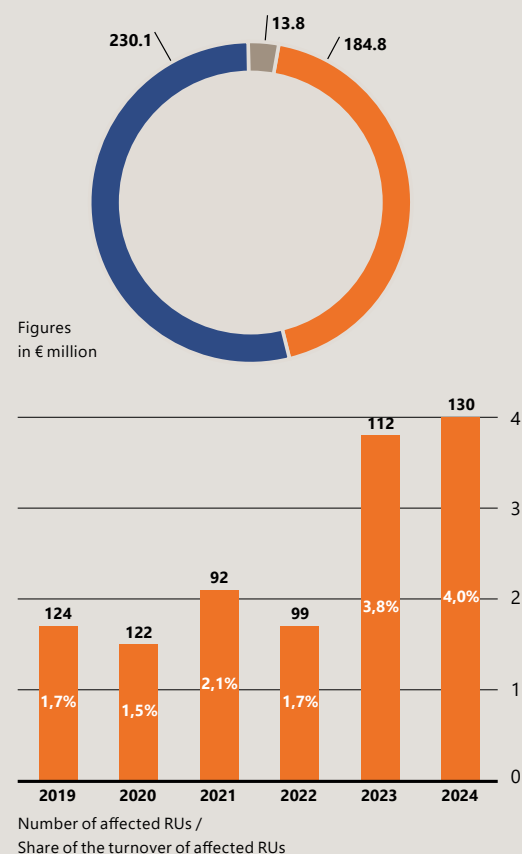
Share of RUs in rail freight transport with a positive operating result (2020–2024; shares in percent) on the left, Breakdown of the operating results for RUs in rail freight transport (2024; in millions of euros and percent of the number of RUs) on the right



Source: BNetzA Market Analysis 2024

A rise in construction activity is driving up additional costs

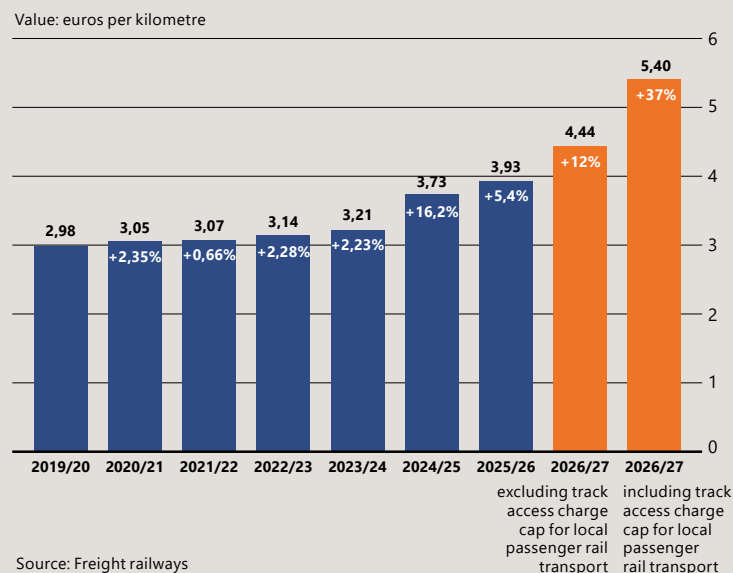
Additional costs due to construction work (2024; Breakdown by type) above; Share of the turnover of RUs (2024; Number of affected RUs) below.



Source: BNetzA Market Analysis 2024

DB InfraGO's track access charges for standard freight trains

Track access charges are not included. The "Standard" market segment includes all train path usages that are not assigned to the "Sehr schwer", "Güternahverkehr", "Gefahrgutganzzug" or "Lokfahrt" market segments.



Source: Freight railways

tainable logistics. Rail transport is of vital importance and forms the backbone of European supply chains – it is not just a back-up solution! We, as companies, are continuing to develop rail freight transport, advising all stakeholders on the necessary reforms and helping the sector to grow. We would like to see more support, both nationally and internationally. ●

Challenging times ahead for European wagon builders

In an industry which has been rocked by world events, Alexej Beljajev, Member of the Board of Directors and responsible for commerce and project management at Tatravagónka a.s., explains how wagon builders are going to have to adapt to ensure a sustainable future.



ALEXEJ BELJAJEV
Member of the Board of Directors
at Tatravagónka a.s.

Ten years ago, the future of Europe was seen as one of increasing economic prosperity. It was also an excellent period for your business, wasn't it?

Yes. Rail transport was also growing – due to the introduction of environmental policies and the focus on CO₂ emissions. Compared to road transport, rail was more environmentally friendly, and if you used an electric locomotive, you were even CO₂ neutral. The intermodal transport market was expanding, and with it came a growing demand for rail freight wagons.

But then the pandemic arrived, and that changed the whole world, didn't it?

We all remember that turbulent period. But for the railways, it was an opportunity to demonstrate their strengths. In some parts of Europe, only trains were able to deliver goods. Border controls became very congested, but rail transport remained smooth. This "bonus" was not lost for the railways, even after the pandemic.



Europe has the strictest standards in the world, and these standards would have to be respected by any licensed manufacturer.

ALEXEJ BELJAJEV

Am I right in thinking that the war in Ukraine in recent years has also had a major impact?

The negative impact on the European economy, and thus on our business, is obvious. Firstly, we had to cope with a shortage of materials and rising energy prices. This was followed by an economic downturn and reduction in transport volumes. Today, tens of thousands of rail freight wagons are out of service. The ability of companies to buy and lease wagons has decreased, which in turn has led to fewer production orders. When business was at its best, demand stood at around 15,000 to 16,000 wagons per year. Today, it is between 8,000 and 9,000. Even so, production capacity still remains at over 16,000 wagons annually.



But surely all this cannot remain without consequences, can it?

No, and it won't. The situation will lead to the closure of certain production plants and to lower output. We don't envisage any economic growth in the foreseeable future. There is a stimulus in the form of military mobility under SAFE, but its effect will be limited. Some manufacturing companies will inevitably close down or will have to shift their focus.

Do you think there is a way to prevent this, or at least to limit it as much as possible?

We could introduce licensed production, which is when a manufacturer with high demand doesn't increase its own production capacity, but instead allows another producer to manufacture in exchange for a licence fee. It sounds logical, but there are pitfalls. Mainly in terms of safety and quality. Europe has the strictest standards in the world, and these standards would have to be respected by any licensed manufacturer. At the same time, it is equally important for all manufacturers entering the European market to have to meet the same safety and quality standards.

What is your overall outlook for the future?

The market will eventually even out for everybody. For now and in the near future, we must adapt and respond to demand as it is. That means expanding services and offering comprehensive solutions. And continuously introducing new possibilities for rail transport. ●



Aerial view of the Tatravagónka factory site in Poprad, Slovakia. Photo: Tatravagónka



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ALEXEJ BELJAJEV



Tatravagónka a.s.

Tatravagónka a.s. specialises in producing freight wagons and bogies and is Europe's largest designer and manufacturer of rail freight wagons. With a total of nine specialised production lines, the company is able to manufacture nine different types of freight wagons simultaneously. Annual production capacity stands at above 4,000 freight wagons and 12,000 bogies. Tatravagónka is the flagship company of a group established in four European countries, with a total workforce of nearly 7,000 employees.

tatravagonka.sk

Rail freight transport workshops: partners for sustainable growth

Increasing regulation, growing technical complexity and the rising shortage of skilled workers are putting rail freight transport workshops under more and more pressure. Added to this, costs are going up while profitability is going down. How can maintenance companies hold their own in this environment and ensure their future sustainability? The article highlights the key challenges and outlines specific solutions.



KATHRIN FÜLLER
Sales Management Freight
Transport and Mobile Service
RailMaint GmbH

The increasingly complex requirements and regulations in rail transport also pose major challenges for workshops. What is more, many workshops date from a time when technical requirements were less stringent. They therefore require constant modernisation.

As the effects of demographic change become increasingly pronounced, there is already a noticeable shortage of skilled workers, and the situation is likely to worsen in the future. At the same time, there have been significant increases in fees in some cases. On top of this, there is insufficient knowledge transfer between the generations. At the same time, the technical complexity of wagons is increasing all the time. Taken together, these factors mean that implementing maintenance processes is becoming a more and more complicated balancing act.

Mounting cost pressure

In addition, wagon keepers have a wide range of requirements that necessitate the application of specific regulations, as well as the production of numerous authorisations and certificates, before entering into a partnership. The steady rise in the cost of spare parts, coupled with shortages of certain components, is aggravating cost pressure and leading to longer wagon standing times.



Photo: RailMaint

The large number of parked wagons that cannot be serviced within the required timeframe means that workshops are faced with a large number of small-scale jobs. This work causes higher administrative and technical costs, while reducing cost-effectiveness. What is more, requirements are constantly increasing with regard to safety, the environment, testing and quality.

Possible solutions for strengthening the sector

How can workshops, which are just as affected by the current economic situation as their customers, position themselves for the future despite rising costs? The development of and investment in modern manufacturing and testing technologies, which are already in use at our sites, are key components of our long-term market positioning.

For example, wheelset workshops use semi-automated NDT (Non-Destructive Testing) processes, which make the traceability of inspections more reliable and reproducible for both inspection staff and customers. A modern wheelset press installed at the Delitzsch site makes it possible to carry out higher volumes of IS3 overhauls. Furthermore, a diverse training portfolio helps to ensure a sustainable workforce. Cooperation between our sites, with their diverse range of services and qualifications, allows us to cope with even the most complex tasks. The

use of multilingual AI applications, combined with the digitisation of workflows and documentation, makes workshop processes more efficient and more transparent for all users.

Forward-looking partnerships

The modernisation of machinery and equipment, the use of environmentally friendly materials and packaging, and the implementation of energy-saving measures are all key factors for a climate-friendly approach. However, despite increasing customer requirements, it is of-

ten only possible to pass on the resulting additional costs to a limited extent.

Close cooperation with our contractual partners and the resulting synergies help us to deliver forward-looking solutions to the diverse challenges facing rail transport.

This can also involve the joint procurement of spare parts and the organisation of refurbishment work. Long-term contracts provide greater planning security for both sides and enable workshops to invest in skilled staff and modern infrastructure.

Cooperation with other market participants, particularly for sharing technical expertise and pooling know-how, can also help to deliver faster and more efficient solutions. Wascosa AG has been a reliable partner for the RailMaint Group at all its sites for many years, guaranteeing a working relationship based on reliability and mutual respect as equals. Open communication and a structured approach to shared issues have built trust and made processes more efficient in the long term.



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KATHRIN FÜLLER

The need for a holistic approach

In our view, adopting a holistic approach is a vital step for the future of the industry, with the common objective of safeguarding Europe's infrastructure and maintenance capabilities in the long term. It is only by coordinating the efforts of all stakeholders that we can achieve the joint goal of sustainable growth in passenger and rail freight transport. ●



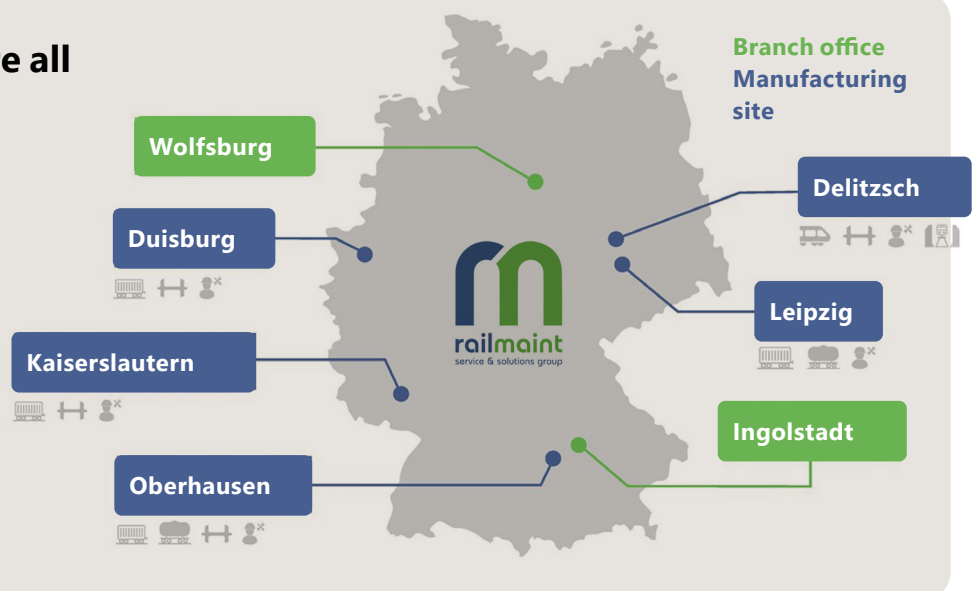
Photo: RailMaint

RailMaint GmbH – we're all in this together

RailMaint GmbH is a private, independent provider of services and solutions for the maintenance and modernisation of railway vehicles and components for passenger and freight transport.

The company operates five workshops and two branch offices in Germany and adapts to the specific requirements of each location.

railmaint.com





Planzer: transport by rail

Rail is a key mode of transport for Planzer. Although the company started out as a truck transport firm, the majority of its general cargo and parcels are now transported overnight by low-emission rail. Since entering the general cargo rail transport sector in the mid-1990s, the company has systematically used rail for major journeys between its railway centres (sites with sidings). Rail transport is also combined with tailored solutions for last-mile delivery.



MARTIN HALLER
Head of Rail Logistics
Planzer Transport AG

Planzer is a third-generation Swiss family business, founded in 1936. After starting out as a haulage company with just one truck, Planzer has since grown into a modern transport and warehousing logistics company with 6,800 employees and over 400 apprentices. A key step in the development of transport towards the establishment of a nationally organised rail system for general cargo was taken in the mid-1990s, when as part of a joint-venture with two partners, Cargo Domizil was bought from SBB. From then on, Planzer steadily integrated more rail transport into its general cargo operations. Since then, the road/rail combination has been firmly integrated into operational processes and continuously expanded.

General cargo and parcels between railway centres
Since taking over Cargo Domizil, Planzer has systematically used rail for the transport of general cargo. Since 2018 – when Planzer entered the Swiss parcel market – small consignments have also been transported by rail between the railway centres. Over the years, the railway network has gradually been expanded. Planzer has built additional railway centres to cover all regions of Switzerland and establish a nationally coordinated rail freight system. Planzer now operates over 80 branches in total, around 62 of which are in Switzerland. 13 of these sites are railway centres and form the backbone of the national rail network.

The main journeys take place at night: general cargo and parcels are transported between the railway centres every night during the week using around 240 rail wagons. Around 60 percent of general cargo and around 80 percent of parcels are transported by rail. At the railway centres, consignments are bundled, handled

General cargo and parcels are transported between the railway centres every night during the week using around 240 rail wagons.
Photo: Planzer

For the last mile, Planzer uses a variety of types of vehicles with different drive technologies – including a horse-drawn carriage in Zermatt.
Photo: Planzer



Planzer has built additional railway centres to cover all regions of Switzerland and establish a nationally coordinated rail freight system.

MARTIN HALLER

and prepared for delivery. Long-distance journeys between urban centres are undertaken by rail, while road transport is primarily used for regional distribution and the last mile.

Urban logistics: last-mile delivery and innovative solutions

For the last mile, Planzer uses a variety of types of vehicles with different drive technologies – depending on the region and the requirements.

Deliveries for Zermatt are also transported by rail. As it is a car-free destination, deliveries are only possible using electric vehicles. Restrictions also apply in the town centre: electric vehicles are not permitted on Bahnhofstrasse between 12 noon and 7 p.m. As there are a lot of parcel recipients on Bahnhofstrasse, Planzer uses a horse-drawn carriage during this time slot. Benny and his carriage take care of the last leg of the journey.

Another example is the highly automated micro-hub solution in Bern, where a fully electric vehicle operating at automation level 4 has been deployed as part of a pi-

lot project. The dynamic micro-hub – known internally as “Mathilde” as a tribute to Planzer’s co-founder – sets off from the Planzer railway centre in Bern carrying fully loaded swap bodies. It delivers these flexibly to wherever small electric delivery vehicles are currently operating in the city and needing to be resupplied. Applications of this kind complement the interplay between road and rail and illustrate how rail transport and urban delivery services can be effectively combined.

Sustainability and strategy

Shifting transport to rail helps to reduce CO₂ emissions and takes the strain off the road infrastructure. For Planzer, rail transport is a key strategic pillar and a long-term solution for organising general cargo and parcel logistics in an efficient, resource-saving manner.

The aim is to shift as much freight as possible to rail for the main leg of the journey and to concentrate road transport on the sections where it is logistically necessary. This enables Planzer to contribute to the sustainable development of freight transport in Switzerland. ●

Intermodal links between Europe and Turkey

Mars Logistics and Wascosa have been cooperating in intermodal rail logistics for several years. Wascosa provides modern intermodal wagons which help the Turkish logistics provider operate efficient and sustainable transport connections between Turkey and Europe.



ERDIN ERENGÜL
Executive Committee Member – Assistant
for Railways General Manager
Mars Logistics

Mars Logistics is among the leading logistics providers specialising in intermodal transport between Turkey and Europe. The company operates an extensive combined transport network linking key economic regions through rail, road and sea transport. Each week, Mars Logistics organises around 1,750 departures to and from Turkey – and operates regular intermodal rail services along major European corridors. These include connections between Halkalı (Istanbul) and Trieste, Luxembourg, Cologne, Budapest, Craiova and Kolin, as well as routes between Sète and Calais. Together, these services form an important backbone for sustainable freight transport between Southeastern Europe and Western European industrial centres.

Efficient intermodal wagon solutions

Within its intermodal operations, Mars Logistics uses different wagon types depending on the transport concept. The company operates its own fleet of around 180 90-foot container flat wagons, which are primarily used for containerised intermodal transport and swap bodies. In addition, the cooperation with Wascosa includes the use of modern T-3000 double pocket wagons, which are designed for the transport of semi-trailers in combined transport. Their flexibility allows efficient integration of different loading units into intermodal supply chains. “The flexibility of the modern intermodal wagons provided by Wascosa enables us to further expand our rail-based transport solutions between Turkey and

Europe,” says Erdin Erengül, Assistant General Manager Rail & Intermodal Freight at Mars Logistics.

Partnership for sustainable logistics

The cooperation between Mars Logistics and Wascosa is based on close operational coordination and the shared ambition to develop reliable and sustainable transport solutions. The use of modern intermodal wagons is helping to shift freight from road to rail, which in turn contributes to the reduction of CO₂ emissions in European freight transport. Mars Logistics is bolstering its rail operations with its own intermodal terminal in Halkalı, which has been in operation since 2023. ●



Mars Logistics

Founded in 1989, Mars Logistics is one of Turkey’s leading logistics providers. It offers integrated supply chain solutions including road, rail, air and sea freight, intermodal transport, warehouse management and insurance services. The company employs around 2,920 people, has an annual revenue of approximately € 602 million, and operates 332,264 m² of warehousing space in 15 cities.

marslogistics.com



A growing partnership in intermodal wagon leasing

Continental Rail was founded in May 2000 in Madrid, with the objective of entering the rail freight market as Spain progressively opened up its railway sector to private operators. Intermodal transport has always been at the heart of the development strategy. The partnership with Wascosa has enabled the company to grow gradually.



MARIO BUÑUEL TEJEDOR
CEO
Continental Rail

Initially owned by the construction group ACS through its subsidiary Vías y Construcciones, Continental Rail positioned itself early as a private operator focused on container transport between Spain's main ports and inland logistics hubs. After obtaining our freight operator licence in October 2005, we launched our first commercial service in 2007, connecting the dry port of Coslada in Madrid with the Port of Valencia using container trains. These early operations marked the beginning of our commitment to intermodal logistics, linking maritime shipping with inland rail transport. A key milestone in our history came in 2021, when the global shipping and logistics group CMA CGM Group acquired Continental Rail as part of its strategy to expand inland logistics capabilities across Europe. The acquisition

strengthened the integration between maritime shipping and rail transport, enabling the group to offer customers a more comprehensive door-to-door logistics solution.

Strong logistics corridors

Today, Continental Rail is one of Spain's main private rail freight operators, specialising in containerised intermodal transport to connect major Spanish ports with inland terminals and industrial regions. Our locomotive fleet includes a mix of diesel and electric units such as the Stadler Euro 6000 and various Iberian-gauge diesel locomotives used across the Spanish network. Thanks to these resources, our operational teams are able to move significant volumes of freight each year so that we can continue to expand our presence along key logistics corridors linking ports, terminals and international routes.

A partnership supporting intermodal growth

As our intermodal activities have expanded, so has the need for reliable and flexible wagon fleets. One of the most important partnerships supporting this growth has been our collaboration with Wascosa. The cooperation began with a relatively modest fleet of 65 intermodal wagons. The objective was clear: to provide the rolling stock required to operate container services between ports, inland terminals and logistics platforms across Spain.

Leasing wagons offered significant advantages. For Continental Rail, it allowed rapid scaling of services without the need for large capital investments in rolling stock. For Wascosa, the partnership created an oppor-

tunity to expand its presence in the Iberian intermodal market while supporting a growing private rail operator.

Expansion to almost 300 wagons

Over the years, this collaboration has steadily expanded. The fleet provided by Wascosa for Continental Rail operations has grown from the initial 65 wagons to almost 300 intermodal wagons today. This growth reflects both the increasing demand for rail-based container transport in Spain and our strategy to develop rail services linked to maritime shipping flows. As part of the broader logistics ecosystem of the CMA CGM Group, Continental Rail plays a key role in connecting seaports with inland distribution centres, supporting more sustainable freight transport chains.

Modern intermodal wagons allow flexible loading configurations in order to accommodate different container lengths and improve train capacity utilisation. This flexibility is essential for operating efficient container trains on the Iberian network, where traffic flows vary between domestic and international services.

New generation of 90-foot container wagons

The most recent step in this collaboration is the addition of 100 new 90-foot container flat wagons, manufactured by the Spanish rolling stock builder Talleres Alegría. These wagons are designed to transport multiple combinations of 20-, 30-, 40- and 45-foot containers, making them particularly well suited for intermodal traffic linked to maritime logistics. Their 90-foot plat-

form length (27.432 metres) allows efficient loading configurations and maximises the number of containers transported per train. By incorporating these new wagons into our fleet, we are further strengthening our ability to provide reliable and competitive container rail services across Spain.

Supported by Spanish and European funding

The procurement of these wagons is also supported by subsidy programmes backed by the Spanish state and the European Union, aimed at encouraging the shift of freight transport from road to rail. These initiatives are part of broader European transport policies that seek to reduce emissions and promote sustainable logistics systems. For Continental Rail, these programmes help accelerate investments in modern intermodal equipment while improving the competitiveness of rail freight transport.

Looking ahead

The collaboration between Continental Rail and Wascosa is a prime example of how partnerships between operators and wagon leasing companies can drive the growth of intermodal rail freight. With the arrival of the new 90-foot container flat wagons and continued support from European transport initiatives, we expect this cooperation to remain a key pillar of our strategy – strengthening rail connections between ports, logistics hubs and industrial regions while contributing to a more sustainable freight transport system in Spain and Europe. ●



READER SURVEY

Your opinion is important to us!

Please take **3 minutes** to answer **6 questions** about the Wascosa infoletter.

Thank you very much!



<https://surveymonkey.com/r/9MQX5RS>



Calendar of events

| DATE | EVENT | CITY | WEBSITE |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| 2026 | | | |
| 6. – 8.5.2026 | ITF 2026 Summit: Funding Resilient Transport | Leipzig, Germany | itf-oecd.org/ |
| 13.5.2026 | VAP Forum Freight Transport | Zurich, Switzerland | cargorail.ch/ |
| 15.5.2026 | RFG Spring Group Meeting | London, UK | rfg.org.uk/ |
| 18. – 21.5.2026 | Transport Research Arena (TRA) 2026 | Budapest, Hungary | traconference.eu/ |
| 20. – 21.5.2026 | The Rise of IoT, AI & Data in Rail | Cologne, Germany | iotandbigdatainrail.com/ |
| 21.5.2026 | RNE General Assembly (GA) | Vienna, Austria & online | rne.eu/calendar/ |
| 27. – 28.5.2026 | Railway Supplier Summit | Lyon, France | railwaysuppliersummit.com/ |
| 27.–29.5.2026 | 9th Intl. Conference on Road and Rail Infrastructure (CETRA 2026) | Bol, Croatia | cetra.grad.hr/ocs/index.php/cetra9/cetra2026 |
| 28.–29.5.2026 | UIP – Keepers’ Summit 2026 | Krakow, Poland | sdruzeni-spv.cz/keepers-summit-28-29-5-2026 |
| 9.–11.6.2026 | 14th International Railway Summit | London, UK | dataedgemedi.com/international-railway-summit/ |
| 1.6.2026 | Eurasia Rail | Istanbul, Turkey | eurasiarail.eu/ |
| 9.–11.6.2026 | VDV Annual Convention 2026 | Karlsruhe, Germany | vdv.de/ |
| 10.–11.6.2026 | UNIFE General Assembly 2026 | Brussels, Belgium | unife.org/events/ |
| 17.–18.6.2026 | VPI General Meeting and Technical Information Day | Frankfurt am Main, Germany | vpihamburg.de/en/events/overview |
| 30.6.–2.7.2026 | Multimodal | Birmingham, UK | multimodal.org.uk/ |
| 6.–10.7.2026 | WCTR 2026 (World Conference on Transport Research) | Toulouse, France | wctr2026.fr/ |
| 26.–27.8.2026 | CRSC General Assembly and Information Event | Neuburg an der Donau, Germany | crscev.de |
| 15.–20.9.2026 | IAA Transportation 2026 | Hanover, Germany | iaa-transportation.com/en |
| 22.–25.9.2026 | InnoTrans 2026 | Berlin, Germany | innotrans.de/en |
| 8.–10.9.2026 | TransLogistica Bucharest | Bucharest, Romania | translogistica.ro/en/ |
| 5.–8.10.2026 | 60th Annual Meeting of EPCA | Vienna, Austria | epca.events/epca60 |
| 20.–21.10.2026 | Railway Days Summit | Bucharest, Romania | railwaysummit.com/ |
| 3.–5.11.2026 | TransLogistica Poland | Warsaw, Poland | translogistica.pl/ |
| 4.11.2026 | Scandinavian Rail Optimisation 2026 | Stockholm, Sweden | scandinavianrail.co.uk/ |
| 5.–6.11.2026 | European Commodities Exchange (ECE) | Rotterdam, Netherlands | ece-rotterdam2026.eu/ |
| 10.–12.11.2026 | Intermodal Europe 2026 | Rotterdam, Netherlands | intermodal-events.com/ |
| 24.11.2026 | 5th DVZ Combined Transport Conference | Hamburg, Germany | dvz.de |

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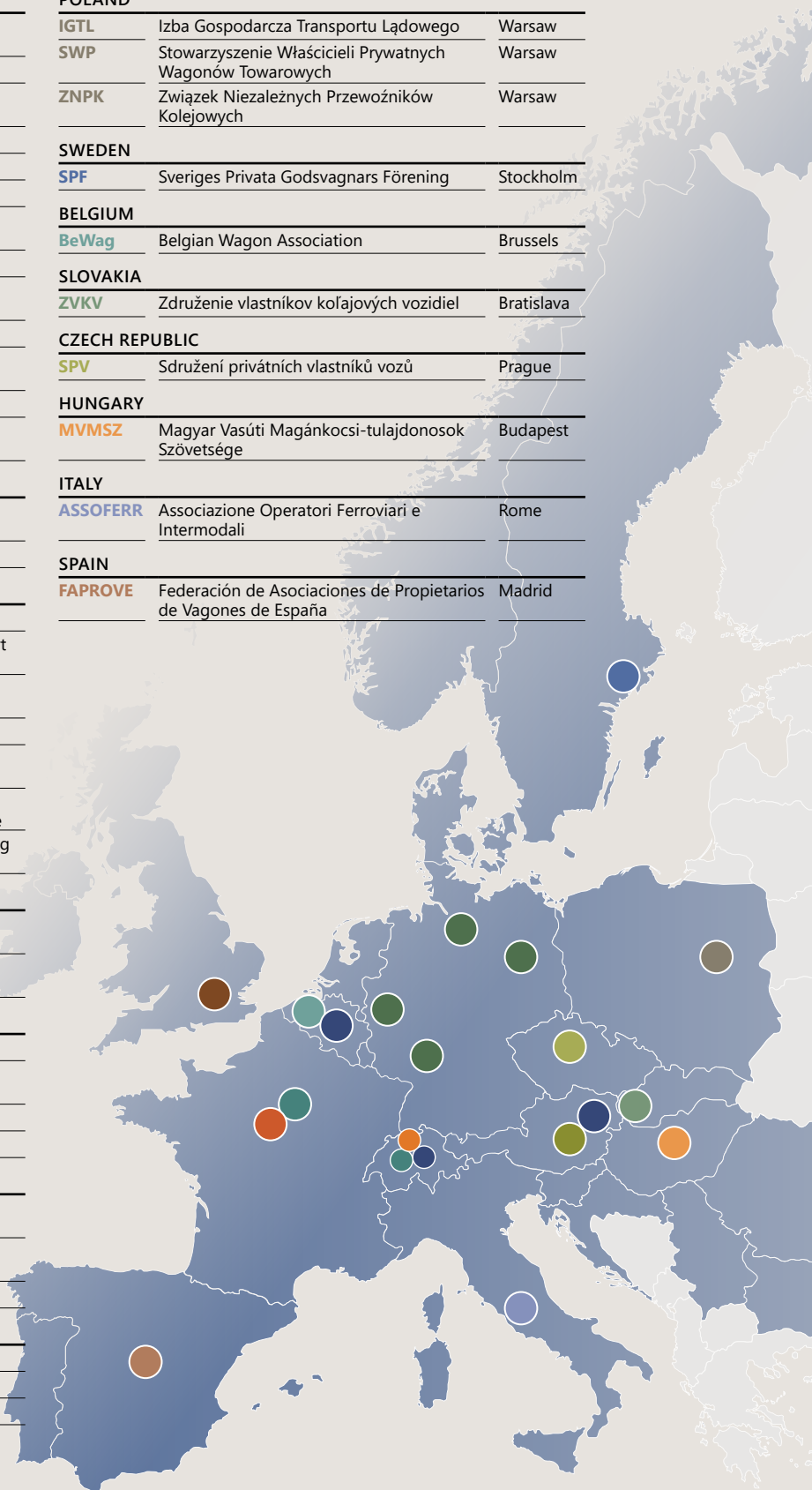
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List of selected associations and organisations involved in European rail freight transport

| ABBREVIATION | ASSOCIATION | CITY |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------|
| EU / EUROPEAN | | |
| AERRL | Association of European Rail Rolling Stock Lessors | Brussels |
| ALLRAIL | Alliance of Rail New Entrants | Brussels |
| CER | Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies | Brussels |
| EIM | European Infrastructure Managers | Brussels |
| ERFA | European Rail Freight Association | Brussels |
| ESC | European Shippers Council | Brussels |
| FEPORIT | Federation of European Private Port Companies and Terminals | Brussels |
| FTE | Forum Train Europe | Bern |
| OTIF | Zwischenstaatliche Organisation für den internationalen Eisenbahnverkehr | Bern |
| RNE | RailNetEurope | Vienna |
| UNIFE | Union des Industries Ferroviaires Européennes | Brussels |
| UIP | International Union of Wagon Keepers | Brussels |
| UIRR | International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport | Brussels |
| INTERNATIONAL | | |
| FIATA | International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations | Geneva |
| UIC | Union Internationale des Chemins de fer | Paris |
| GERMANY | | |
| APS | Allianz pro Schiene | Berlin |
| BGL | Bundesverband Güterkraftverkehr Logistik und Entsorgung | Frankfurt |
| mofair | mofair/Bundesverband der deutschen Eisenbahnen | Berlin |
| NEE | Netzwerk Europäischer Eisenbahnen | Berlin |
| VDB | Verband der Bahnindustrie in Deutschland e.V. | Berlin |
| VDV | Verband Deutscher Verkehrsunternehmen | Berlin/ Cologne |
| VPI | Verband der Privatgüterwagen-Interessenten e.V. | Hamburg |
| AUSTRIA | | |
| VPI-AT | Verband der Privatgüterwagen-Interessenten Österreich | Vienna |
| WKÖ | Fachverband Güterbeförderungsgewerbe – WKÖ | Vienna |
| SWITZERLAND | | |
| ASTAG | Schweizerischer Nutzfahrzeugverband | Bern |
| LITRA | LITRA – Informationsdienst für den öffentlichen Verkehr | Bern |
| VAP | VAP – Verband der verladenden Wirtschaft | Zurich |
| VöV | Verband öffentlicher Verkehr | Bern |
| FRANCE | | |
| AFWP | Association Française des Wagons de marchandises Privés | Paris |
| FNTR | Fédération Nationale des Transports Routiers | Paris |
| UTP | Union des Transports Publics et Ferroviaires | Paris |
| UNITED KINGDOM | | |
| RFG | Rail Freight Group | London |
| RHA | Road Haulage Association | London |
| RWA | Rolling Stock and Wagon Association | London |

| ABBREVIATION | ASSOCIATION | CITY |
|-----------------------|---|------------|
| POLAND | | |
| IGTL | Izba Gospodarcza Transportu Lądowego | Warsaw |
| SWP | Stowarzyszenie Właścicieli Prywatnych Wagonów Towarowych | Warsaw |
| ZNPK | Związek Niezależnych Przewoźników Kolejowych | Warsaw |
| SWEDEN | | |
| SPF | Sveriges Privata Godsvagnars Förening | Stockholm |
| BELGIUM | | |
| BeWag | Belgian Wagon Association | Brussels |
| SLOVAKIA | | |
| ZVKV | Združenie vlastníkov kofajových vozidiel | Bratislava |
| CZECH REPUBLIC | | |
| SPV | Sdružení privátních vlastníků vozů | Prague |
| HUNGARY | | |
| MVMSZ | Magyar Vasúti Magánkocsi-tulajdonosok Szövetsége | Budapest |
| ITALY | | |
| ASSOFERR | Associazione Operatori Ferroviari e Intermodali | Rome |
| SPAIN | | |
| FAPROVE | Federación de Asociaciones de Propietarios de Vagones de España | Madrid |



This list is not exhaustive.