

Press Release

International Rail Freight Conference on transport between Europe and Asia (IRFC 2013) took place in Prague for the fourth time

On 13 –15 March Prague hosted the 4th “International Rail Freight Conference” on transports between Europe and Asia (IRFC 2013) with the subtitle “Dialogue Between Railways and their Customers”. The conference was organised by the JERID company, a member of the OLTIS Group, under the auspices of the Ministry of Transport of the Czech Republic and the international organisations OSJD (Organisation for the Cooperation of Railways), UIC (International Union of Railways), UNIFE (Association of the European Rail Industry), CER (Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies) and CCTT (Coordinating Council on Trans-Siberian Transportation). The conference was also supported by 18 partners, especially from a number of international organisations.

This event was organised parallel to other events including Euro Asian Railway Forum, discussions of the European Management Committee of UIC (EMC) and the Galileo User Forum about the use of the global navigation satellite system services (GNSS) in freight transport and logistics. The conference hosted also a meeting of the committees of AROS (Association of Rail Operators Slovakia) and GETA (Green European Transport Association).

The themes of the lectures and debates discussed such key issues as the perspective of the railway development in Europe and Asia, new railway systems, railway corridors, East-West connections, 1435/1520 mm interoperability, simplifying the procedures of railway border crossings, e-commerce in railway freight transport, modern logistics solutions, intermodality, support to international cooperation, cross border and customs issues in transportation, shipment tracking, exceptional shipments, tariffs and price formation, railway freight market competition, combined and container transport, cooperation among railways, infrastructure, safety, encouraging of the international projects to boost the railway freight transport (Shift2Rail, European “green” transport, etc.).

“We consider the Trans Siberia Railway and Baikal Amur Railway a basis for the new railway corridor, which can be used as a foundation for the new Euro-Asian transport corridor. We are already working on ways to manage transportation of containers across the whole Trans Siberia Railway up to the EU borders within 7 days.”

Vladimir Yakunin, President of Russian Railways

This year’s conference, just like the previous one, was dedicated to the question, how to boost the role of railways and railway freight transport and its competitiveness in the modern transport system. Railway experts from the departments of transportation, railways, operators, railway industry companies, carriers and other participants of the railway market in Europe and Asia took part in the conference. The importance of the meeting is highlighted by the geography of the participants: the conference was visited by more than 330 representatives of the railway industry from 157 companies from 31 countries of Europe, Asia and Africa.

“Railway is not just a means to transport containers. It can be a great alternative to solve a number of problems. The key issue is transport time, because time is money. Frankly speaking, we need to improve the harbour infrastructures, strengthen the safety of the corridors, improve the technical systems and increase the speed. This will eventually allow the corridors to get faster and we will reach a greater share of the transport market.”

***Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, General Manager of UIC
(from the interview for RZD-TV Channel)***

42 speakers from 19 countries gave lectures and presentations, among them the representatives from the committee of OSJD, UIC, CER, CCTT, UNIFE and other important European and Asian organisations.

In the conference programme the lectures were divided into several thematic sections:

- International organisations and transport corridors;
- Strategic directions in Euro-Asian freight transport;
- Main problems of the Euro-Asian railway freight transport;
- Transport systems;
- Infrastructure.

The theoretical part dealt with freight law and legislation, interoperability and the role of international organisations in the development of transportation between Europe and Asia, including a greater use of the unified consignment notes CIM/SMGS. In their speeches the representatives of the Asian and European railway companies shared their experience from the transcontinental transportation, container and intermodal transportation and informed about the projects, they are currently working on. Important information was provided also in the presentations dealing with the technical options at the individual transport corridors, establishment of logistics centres of intermodal terminals and the use of transport and information technologies.

The words of the participants also confirmed, that we need to further develop the freight transportation between Europe and Asia including container and intermodal transport. Only improved quality of services, shortening the cargo delivery times and ensuring smooth state border crossing procedures, providing competitive prices can ensure success and boost the competitiveness of railway transport and its efficiency. To increase the importance of railway industry in the overall integrated transport system in Europe and Asia, we need to ensure regular exchange info information about the experience with railway freight transport technologies and to develop cooperation in this matter.

The participants of IRFC 2013 expressed the conviction, that dialogue must continue as well as intense sharing of practical experience among railway companies, transport operators, producers and suppliers of railway transport equipment, carriers and customers from various Euro-Asian countries, where it seems fruitful to continue in such events like conferences or seminars, to provide opportunities to discuss topical issues and the future development in the organisation or railway transport, including container and combined transport between Europe and Asia, with the participation of government officials in charge of railways, and with the participation of railways, railway associations and companies, such as providers of forwarding services and operators and organisations participating in the transport process and international organisations participating in the rail freight transport.

The conclusions of the conference led to an adoption of a Declaration to the Euro-Asian Governments to Improve Competitiveness and Efficiency of Railway Transport (see attachment). The purpose of the declaration is to increase awareness about the solutions to the railway transport problems.

The first day of the conference ended with a Gala Evening with a ceremonial award of the international "Golden Charriot" award for transportation. It was awarded to select associated members of OSJD for their great contribution to the development of the international railway transport. Among the award winners there were: Ministry of Transport of the Czech Republic, Czech Railways (České dráhy), DeutscheBahn, Rail Cargo Hungaria, JERID and the Railway Research Institute (Výzkumný Ústav Železniční).

The conference was complemented with an exhibition with 15 exhibitors from the railway carriers, railway industry, IT companies, international organisations and media. On the third day of the conference, 15 March, there was a tour by a historic motor train to the testing circuit of the Railway Research Institute in Velim and to the brewery in Nymburk known from the Czech film "Postržiny".

The next year of the IRFC conference will take place in Prague again in 2015. See more at www.irfc.eu.

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