

From patchwork to network

ó It's important to proceed from patchwork to a European network that provides interoperability and quality, says **Klaus-Uwe Sondermann**, from German KombiConsult GmbH.

Freight transport by rail still needs to increase its share. There are projects and development plans, but the time scale is not the fastest.

Now development planners might get help from an unexpected ally:

ó Greenhouse gas emissions might come to help in this. 24 percent of gas emissions come from transport, and of that 71,9 percent from road transport. Transport was the only sector that couldn't decrease its share of emissions. This is where we, rail transport, step in, Sondermann says.

Regulation defines the requirements and priorities for the core network.

ó In development, the priorities are now deployment of ERTMS, The **European Rail Traffic Management System**, migration to a standard track gauge, noise mitigation, interoperability, standards for axle load, line speed and train length, Sondermann tells.

ERTMS is an EU-backed initiative that aims to enhance cross-border interoperability and to create an all-European standard for signaling and control systems.

The development is done partly under EU-run CEF (The Connecting Europe Facility). CEF supports trans-European networks and infrastructures in the sectors of transport, telecommunications and energy, and TEN-T is one of its three sectors.

Budget a challenge

However, the real challenge comes from budgetary constraints.

The budget for CEF is 33,2 billion euros. Of this a bit over 26 billion goes to transport, which is a considerably bigger sum than in previous years.

ó Budget is huge, but also the requirements are huge. There are border crossings, missing links and bottlenecks that need to be developed, Sondermann says.

As Sondermann points out, this money is not meant for maintenance, but it brings additional costs.

Sondermann asks for Europe-wide co-operation.

ó European co-ordinated action is needed. Studies of real investment needs are needed, they will be presented in the summer of 2016 for the European Parliament. Infra managers need to join their forces now and start lobbying more, Sondermann says.

The 2011 White Paper on sustainable transport system connecting Europe and providing links between countries by European Commission outlines the aims and directions.

ó What we need now, is smart measures, faster time scale and short-term actions, Sondermann emphasizes.