CONNECTING
KNOWLEDGE BY RAIL

Position Paper Rail Regulation

RoCK-Regions of Connected Knowledge

RoCK builds political support at EU level by organising European conferences and showcasing the project at international events, influencing policymakers to simplify rail regulations and discussing with the rail industry and politicians the practicalities of such changes in regulation. RoCK receives ERDF subsidies through Interreg IVB. Please find information on the project at the end of this paper and on our website www.rock-project.eu.

Rail Regulation

All trains running in more than one European country have to deal with different sets of national regulations, such as safety certifications for rolling stock, cross-border taxes etc. The trains have to be recognised by different national organisations such as network managers, and tickets will be distributed through different channels. These are competitive disadvantages that negatively impact the business case and quality of international rail links.

Implementation of the European Open Access Directive

The deregulation which came into effect on the 1st January 2010 is the legal precondition for the RoCK project as it allows train companies from one country to operate train services into another EU country. From the 1st January are international rail connections not an exemption of the rule any more but should be treated and operated as any other national rail connection.

This principle set out by the EU will stay a theory if it is not underpinned by national regulation and procedures that support the development of competition. Competition that leads to more, better and further integrated railway services. For European citizens, better transport services also means that one of the most sustainable form of transport should serve a European population that increasingly takes advantage of its freedom to travel regardless of national borders for business and leisure alike.

Conflict between short term commercial viability and long term strategic benefits

Due to e.g. technical incompatibilities, for a German-Dutch IC connection dual-electricity train sets need to be purchased. Costs that negatively influence the business case for said connection. On the other hand, benefits, e.g regional development, decarbonisation of transport, reliability of transport, congestion relief, modal shift, energy security of transport, land use, reduction of accidents, fine dust

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reduction..., that lead stakeholders to promote such new connections have no monetary value and thus do not form part of the business decision.

Solution

The EU has commissioned research with the aim to develop a common EU methodology to forecast marginal social costs allowing to internalise external costs in future Cost-Benefit Analysis. The RoCK investments rely on political support and at least in the start-up phase on public funding. A CBA including the above mentioned external benefits would justify public spending.

Whose responsibility are international rail connections?

There is no organization who has the duty to actively promote rail services that RoCK tries to implement. They are not long distance or high speed connections, so national governments do not feel responsible, on the other hand regional authorities feel not responsible for international rail connections.

Even though these services would serve long standing European strategic policy goals such as accessibility of the single European market, territorial cohesion, energy security, sustainability, reliability of transport and economy of scale effects of an integrated European railway network.

Solution

The solution could lie in the proliferation of European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The EGTC is a new European legal instrument designed to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. The EGTC is a legal entity, it enables regional and local authorities and other public bodies from different member states, to set up cooperation groupings with a legal personality. An EGTC could manage and develop transport beyond national borders.

Existing concessions

The open access directive allows member states to limit open access if new operators would endanger the equilibrium of existing public service contracts. For example in the Netherlands new train operators may not cannibalize the 'hooftnet concessie'(core network concession). Meaning, even though national railway markets are in principle open for competition, in the Netherlands your are not allowed to attract 'national' passengers. The 'hooftnet concessie' covers the majority of Dutch territory. The same is true for existing regional concessions in Germany. On the other hand, because the 'hooftnet concessie' and German concessions end before or with the national border. Cross-border connections receive no national subsidies and have to be financially self-sufficient.

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Solution

One could overcome this situation by tendering public service contracts for international regions or to extend national railway concessions so that they include good quality rail services to the next important transport hub abroad. The situation today is that concessions include the first station across the border. This would also allow to align timetables and to procure suitable rolling stock.

Single European Sky - Single European Rail

International rail services have to pay for decades of nationally focused railway planning, capacity and service provision. Unlike national services cross border rail services have additional burdens due to crossing a national border. Technical inconsistencies, two sets of national stakeholders, two languages, different tariff systems... are costly to overcome. Whereas the potential passenger market first has to be developed (e.g. over 90% transport market share of the car on the cross-border corridors Eindhoven-Düsseldorf and Maastricht-Brussels) and is limited by existing concessions.

The effect is that exactly those services that would tackle transport bottlenecks in the European transport network sustainable, are relatively disadvantaged by European deregulation, as on both sides of the border national and regional railway systems exist that are, for good reasons publicly subsidized.

Solution

RoCK supports the 'Single European Rail' concept which is based on the Single European Sky initiative. In the Single European Sky initiative a Community regulator will merge upper European airspace, currently divided into national regions. He will organize this airspace uniformly, with air traffic control areas based on operational efficiency, not national borders. The airline industry after its deregulation developed common security standards, common booking systems and has a common business language. For the airline sector also common safety certificates exist, handed out by the European Aviation Safety Agency. RoCK supports the formation of a European Railway body with strong regulatory powers. This new body should also safeguard open access to train slots, timetables and train station facilities, e.g. ticket distribution.

Regions of Connected Knowledge (RoCK)

Why international, interoperable and consumer-friendly rail services are so important for knowledge regions.

RoCK focuses on getting the most out of the existing infrastructure and developing smart rail services to improve the transport networks between centres of knowledge regardless of national borders. National borders are still a bottleneck for the free

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flow of people and ideas, which is an essential prerequisite for a single European knowledge economy. Transnational public transport connections are more expensive to build, carry fewer passengers and tickets are more expensive than on national networks. Today, only high-speed rail links can compete with travel by air and road.

Project partners are:

City of Eindhoven, Lead Partner (NL), Parkstad Limburg (NL), City of Maastricht (NL), City of Venlo (NL), City of Aachen (DE), AVV, Aachener Verkehrsverbund (DE), City of Mönchengladbach (DE), Vlaamse Vervoermaatschappij De Lijn (BE), Région Nord-Pas-de-Calais (FR), Reading Borough Council (GB) , SEEDA South East England Development Agency (GB)

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RoCK is a major European project which has secured € 5.9 million of European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) under the EU INTERREG IVB North West Europe programme. The lead partner City of Eindhoven, together with 10 partners from the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Germany and the UK, is encouraging cooperation between innovative knowledge regions. In addition to the partners, a large number of strategically important organisations are associated with the project and have signed a letter of support. Strategic partners include local and regional governments, chambers of commerce, development organisations, regional cooperatives and transport bodies.Together they have the critical mass to build on North West Europe's economic strength.

Smooth circulation of knowledge workers is crucial for knowledge regions, and face-to-face contact is still a vital business requirement. A strong national and international transport infrastructure is a prerequisite for business. As the RoCK partners come from different knowledge regions, cooperation is essential for each of those areas. Together, they can form enough critical mass to improve transportation at a high level of scale, both cross-border and transnational. In general, RoCK seeks to make smart small-scale investments with a large impact on connectivity. The project addresses technical barriers to quality improvement, but also barriers relating to institutional contexts.

RoCK removes operational barriers

This addresses issues such as differences in rolling stock and national safety regulations, resulting in the need for time-consuming changes at the border, infrequent schedules and speed limitations. Together, the RoCK partners can implement mobility measures that have a high impact at a relatively small budget.

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Infrastructure actions

Eindhoven – Venlo – Mönchengladbach – Düsseldorf

Eindhoven – Heerlen – Aachen

The existing operational and technical barriers need to be removed to establish efficient and attractive Intercity connections feeding into the German HST network via Aachen and Düsseldorf.

Maastricht – Hasselt (Light Rail)

This is a new passenger route using part of an old freight line to connect the two university cities. The signalling and safety systems need to be updated to allow Belgian light rail rolling stock to operate on Dutch tracks.

Transmanche Metro

This new inter-regional rail service uses existing high-speed rail infrastructure to connect cities and regions in Kent (UK) and Nord-Pas-de-Calais (France) not served by Eurostar with each other and with the existing transnational point-to-point services to London, Paris and Brussels.

Improving accessibility and stimulating use

Activities include a feasibility study for an innovative ‘people mover’ between Aachen HST station and Aachen University, international integration of ticketing systems, marketing of cross-border rail links and the assessment of the specific needs and demands of the target audience, which consists largely of knowledge workers.

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