

The European Voice of Freight Logistics and Customs Representatives

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RE: Consultation on multi-annual contracts for rail infrastructure quality

As customers, freight forwarders and logistics service providers need reliable, efficient and qualitative rail freight services. The first and second railway packages have liberalised the market and one can already observe the progress in countries that have fully embraced competition. However, for competition to produce all its affects the appropriate infrastructural framework must be in place.

In addition one may observe that competition has yet to reach a full continental dimension, because many important countries are showing less progress than others. For this reason it will be possible to observe the benefits of competition on continental level only when at least all 27 EU Member States reach a reasonably evolved competition dimension.

Infrastructure management plays a crucial role in ensuring an optimal level of use and maintenance of available infrastructure, as well as the necessary development of the latter. A sound, transparent and predictable management is an important factor of reliability of rail services as well as a precious element to allow for full and fair competition on the rail.

In principle, CLECAT has a positive opinion on the idea of multi-annual contracts insofar as they would appear to provide an adequate tool to contribute to achieving the necessary reliability of rail freight services, at least from an infrastructural point of view.

As regards criteria to be fulfilled by these multi-annual contracts, as well as specific elements the latter should feature, CLECAT believes that relevant national authorities and infrastructure managers – rather than users – are best-placed to provide the most accurate opinions, based on their respective knowledge and experience. This would indeed provide optimal conditions as and if both national authorities and IM see this instrument as a tool to foster a competitive environment amongst the various service providers.

CLECAT is convinced that the combination of the above elements with the emergence of rail freight dedicated (or prioritised) networks at continental level would provide a significant boost to the appeal of rail freight services all over Europe.