

4th Technical Committee on Railway

Summary of the session with private Railway Undertakings

The Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community organized 4th TC on Railway. The meeting was held in Belgrade on 4th and 5th March.

One of the most interesting sessions was about the role of private sector and their position on the market.

Mr Dritan Spahiu, CEO of “Albrail” presented its activities as well as challenges.

- Albrail is the only company in the Western Balkans that is at the same time Infrastructure Manager and Railway Undertaking. They have concession for use of public railway infrastructure for 25 years, with a possible extension to 35 years.
- They were obliged, by the Contract with Albanian government, to make rehabilitation two distances (Fier Vlore and Fier Bals). Currently, Albrail is carrying out around 750.000 t/year, which is almost 50% of the freight rail market share in Albania.
- Albrail has obligation to establish passenger transport, but this issue should be further coordinated with Government.
- Regarding the safety and interoperability, they should respect all technical standards and rules under the rail legislation in Albania.
- Future activities: rehabilitation work needs to be finalised next year, passenger as a main focus, possible connections to and from Tirana, as well to the airport, company might apply for the traffic.
- Publishing of the network statement will be next year, open to others from next year on.
- They learnt that private companies could apply for EU funds, which they intend to do.

Open issues for the further clarification with Ministry of Infrastructure

- Passenger transport, number of trains, PSO contract, Track Access Charge, new entrants

Mr Branko Petkovic, General Director and owner of the “Kombinovani prevoz” (first private RU in Serbia) presented circumstances and problems which they are facing.

Despite the fact that the first modern Railway law was adopted in 2005, there was no political will to open the market. In 2016 Serbia decided to open the market at national level with aim to receive grants.

NS were created and in 2017 first private freight train was operated.

The main challenges are:

- Today RUs have a problem of systematic nature. There is no visible discrimination, but dominant operator (national) has a beneficial position in terms of timetable.
- There are problems at border crossing – too much administration,
- There is no sharing of service facilities (for instance: approach to workshops)

- Reliability of timetable, so there is no possibility to predict departure or arrival time of trains
- Newcomers have problems to get the paths, it will be a problem as more of them enter into the market.

Problems exist but are being resolved as they become obstacle, with assistance of market regulator and other government bodies. Transport volume in 2019 was 900.000 tonnes or 1900 trains and is constantly increasing. Overall- good prospects.

Mr Besim Asllani, CFO/Rail Executive Director of the "Transrail" presented situation in Kosovo*:

The main highlights are:

- Change from legislative to softer obstacles
- There are obstacles from state RU Trainkos, no entrance for the private RUs to the maintenance workshop in Kosovo
- Big problem with international wagons that could not be maintained, there are additional costs because of transfer to Macedonia, open problem not resolved.
- Dominant position of the IM: IM has different attitude to private operator and to state RUs
- Private RU pays Track access Charge with a 30 days deadline to pay = unequal treatment of market players
- Services that RU does not asks for are invoiced.
- There are problems in the track access contract.
- RU contacted Railway Regulatory Agency, a positive recommendation was issued by RRA.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.