



# MARATHON NEWSLETTER

MAke RAil The HOpe for protecting Nature

## THE RAIL TRANSPORT SIMPLIFICATION AND SERVICE INDUSTRIALISATION, THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIMES

By **Alexandra Gurau**

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European Commission, DG Research  
and Innovation\**

The expert evaluators that recommended the MARATHON project for EC funding have found that this project properly **addresses some of the key challenges of rail freight transport** in the European context such as transport simplification and service industrialization.

Objectives like these deserve to be supported.

Research funded by the EU is not only expected to be of high scientific quality and to **take into account previous relevant researches**, but its results should also contribute to help Europe responding to the challenges of the 21st century.

The European Commission has set as one of its goals in the most recent **White Paper on transport to shift 30% of road freight over 300 km to modes such as rail** or waterborne transport by 2030 and more than 50% by 2050. So the common wish is to look forward to seeing results that can shortly be put in place for

the benefit of the sector and for Europe as a whole.

Like all successful cooperation, this project requires open-mindedness, a view of the bigger picture rather than self-interest and a very positive attitude to bring doubters into agreement with the project goals. It is clear that MARATHON consortium - covering a diverse and relevant range of stakeholders - has the competencies and the opportunities to avoid any misunderstandings or conflicts of interest.

This will not only enable MARATHON to make a positive step forward but to contribute **for a step change in European transportation allowing rail freight to regain its central role in freight mobility**.

I would like to wish MARATHON a lot of success in its efforts to produce tangible and cost effective results and I look forward to seeing the proposed project solutions turned into real applications for the benefit of the European freight mobility.

*\*The views expressed are purely those of the writer and may not in any circumstances be regarded as stating an official position of the European Commission.*

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### Inside this issue:

The Rail Transport Simplified	1
MARATHON at a Glance	2
The MARATHON Kick-off	3
MARATHON Project Partners	4



## MARATHON AT A GLANCE

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The project officially started on 1 April 2011. The Kick off meeting on 7-8 April was hosted in Paris by **RFF** in their headquarters supported by **SNCF, ALSTOM, D'APPOLONIA** and **NEWOPERA**.

**Project duration:**  
36 months



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### Main Objective

**MARATHON** is the acronym of "**MA**ke **RA**il **T**he **H**ope for **pr**o-**te**cting **N**ature".

MARATHON Project is a project co-financed by the EU Commission under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Program. One of the key paradigms to be resolved for **bringing back cargo to Rail** is the offering in the market place of a better service product at lower costs.

This difficult challenge can be overcome and translated into reality by realising the very simple definition made by a top Railway manager who said: "**it is necessary to transport more cargo using the same resources**".

In the NEWOPERA Project, financed under the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Program, a full Work Package (WP) was dedicated to this issue and market findings supported by scientific university studies indicated that this objective can be achieved by **deploying longer, faster and heavier trains on the existing infrastructures**.

It is obvious that investments in hardware and software technologies, signalling, braking, radio communications, systems integration and a different management of the infrastructures are necessary.

Some investments in the Rail infrastructure for train overtaking sidings and in hubs and terminals are also to be carried out but such investments are immensely inferior when compared to any new initiatives.

All of this without taking into consideration the **very long time-to-**

**market for realizing any new infrastructure** investments in a societal context where the additional transport capacity is needed almost immediately.

Only few years ago the available technologies were not probably up to the required standards. The **recent fast evolution in the technological field** coupled with more sophisticated and **powerful locomotors** and the last generation of rolling stock supported by radio communication technologies are providing the tools for translating into reality this long awaited project.

The longer commercially faster and heavier trains can deliver the substantial advantage of **generating the much needed extra capacity** on the existing rail infrastructure allowing to industrialise the transport process between **ports, inland hubs and terminals** and between freight villages themselves, increasing the system productivity.

This is a pre-requisite for **reducing the operating costs** making it possible to sell the rail services in the market place at an inferior cost. The transport industrialisation moreover is conducive to set departures between terminals, helping both infrastructure managers and rail operators in simplifying the total chain delivering a better service to the users.

The step change is achieved by applying a completely new business model based on the selling of capacity reversing decades of wrong practices. In fact in the service field the services have to be available if one wants the customers to be able to satisfy their needs.

## The Project Structure

The **Market uptake** which lasts the whole project duration, is dealing with the **market requirements**, the **deployment plan**, the **proposal for the Tec Rec** and the **MARATHON Handbook**.

The **specifications and system architecture** is dealing with the **operational scenario**, the **Technical Specification**, the **Hazards and the Architecture Development**.

The **application of technologies** is dealing with the **communication technologies**, the **interfaces**, the **safety requirements**, the **dynamics**, the **adaptation design**, the **laboratory testing** and the **train mock up tests**.

The **business case simulation and evaluation** is including the **business case**, the **simulation of trains circulation**, the **sustainability assessment**.

As a final result the **pilot test** is including the **train consist simulation**, the **MARATHON products integration** on locomotives and the **pilot test run** on the network.

The **technological activities achieving the final results** of the pilot testing is coordinated by the **MARATHON Project Management Structure**, the **Quality Management**, the **Technical Coordination** as well as the **Dissemination Activity**.



At the Kick Off Meeting, RFF Headquarters – Paris  
MARATHON Technical Coordinator **Armand Toubol** and MARATHON Admin. Coordinator **Valerio Recagno**

### **MARATHON Kick Off**

7-8 April 2011  
RFF Headquarters, Paris

*EXTRACT FROM PRESS RELEASE (continued on page 4)*

The MARATHON Project is set to Reduce Costs by Maximizing Productivity of the European Rail Network:

Anticipating the modal shift from road to rail which is the object of the recently published White Paper from the European Commission the MARATHON project is aiming to improve the rail infrastructure productivity reducing operating costs for making rail freight more competitive.

The European Commission, together with the entire European rail sector, recognises the need for creating a cost-efficient and highly productive rail freight market as a central pillar for a European sustainable mobility. The MARATHON project focuses on the existing infrastructure to realise this ambition.

Due to its past fragmentation, the European railway system efficiency must be conquered through harmonisation and standardisation of the operating rules making them uniform in the EU Rail Freight space. In pursuing this overall objective the fast implementation of technologies and business solutions capable of delivering operational and visible cost effective results represents a fundamental improvement.

The MARATHON project is set to implement in practice the business case of operating longer heavier and faster trains on a selected high-volume Trans European freight corridor. The increase of trains length, speed and weight on a *(continued next page)*

(continued from previous page) currently constrained rail infrastructure is the key element of this project.

The bundling of freight volumes combining intermodal with other corridor directional traffic between large scale terminals/hubs/ports is expected to generate the critical mass fostering advanced rail freight services based on transport industrialisation produced at lower costs. Furthermore the rail system management will be rejuvenated by adopting a cooperative approach between the transport actors of the entire rail freight transport chain as largely applied in other modalities.

The MARATHON project through the adoption of innovative hardware/software and radio communication technologies is to set an example for other European infrastructure managers and operators aiming at implementing these longer faster and heavier trains. The achievement of greater lines productivity combined with EU standards and recognised safety rules are a step change towards greater effectiveness on rail tracks delivering the EU citizens a more environment friendly and sustainable cargo mobility.

## THE MARATHON PROJECT PARTNERS

VITAL COMPETENCIES INCLUDE INTERMODALITY, RAIL FREIGHT OPERATORS, INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGERS, HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY AND RADIO COMMUNICATION PROVIDERS, SYSTEM INTEGRATORS, LOCOMOTION INDUSTRIES, ENGINEERING, MARKETING AND UNIVERSITIES. RESEARCH AND SECTORIAL ASSOCIATIONS CONNECTED WITH RAIL INDUSTRY ARE ALSO PRESENT IN THE CONSORTIUM.



## MAKE RAIL THE HOPE FOR PROTECTING NATURE

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