

ENHANCING INTEROPERABILITY FOR FACILITATION OF INTERNATIONAL RAILWAY TRANSPORT





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Efficient international railway transport depends in part on high level of interoperability among the railways. Interoperability of railways, however, is a very broad concept and its implementation requires the cooperation of many entities, large budgets and a long time, it is very important for the involved countries to define as precisely as possible the level of interoperability they intend to achieve, most likely in a gradual approach.

The study details three main components of railway interoperability (a) unified contractual obligations vis-a-vis customers from origin to destination (or the legal interoperability) (b) common technical parameters of railways infrastructure and rolling stock (or the technical interoperability) (c) harmonized operational practices over an entire international route (or the operational interoperability).

The three components of the railway interoperability (technical, operational, legal) are tightly interconnected. First, the unified legal framework in the relationship with the customers is essential, regardless of the level of technical and operational interoperability. Second, achieving a certain technical interoperability through large investments is not justified if this is not capitalized in achieving appropriate operational interoperability for obtaining the targeted competitiveness of railways on the market.

The study defines three levels of technical and operational interoperability- level A - wagons of the train cannot cross the border, level B - wagons of the train can cross the border and level C - wagons and locomotive of the train can cross the border. It further identifies (a) technical parameters for railway infrastructure and rolling stock to be agreed for enhancing technical interoperability (b) operational parameters for defined level of operational interoperability.

The operational interoperability aspect goes beyond railways to harmonization of rules and regulations of other border agencies such as customs that are involved in international railway transport. Legal interoperability could be ensured if the railway of region become members of one of the railway organization.

The countries of region could learn from the experience of European Union that has been taking number of steps to enhance interoperability of railways in Europe. For achieving interoperability countries in the region must adopt a pragmatic approach, based on result oriented decisions, with achievable targets on short, medium and long term. It is expected that the member countries would play a major role in achieving interoperability in railway through following: (a) support the investments in railway infrastructure to achieve technical interoperability; (b) harmonizing the regulatory framework for the railway industry (mainly common safety rules) to facilitate cross-recognition of rolling stock; (c) streamlining border crossing procedures to facilitate international traffic; and (d) implementing uniform commercial and legal framework for international rail transport.

The study concludes by suggesting that ESCAP could offer a common platform for all countries in the region for activities related to the railway interoperability subject, preserving common data base and knowledge for member countries. Enhancing interoperability in railways is a means to end which is to achieve more efficient international railway transport to support sustainable development among the countries this study attempts to provide ideas for higher interoperability among railway of the region.





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