

LA ENTREVISTA

Carlo Borghini és el Director Ejecutivo de Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking, la organización más importante en materia de investigación e innovación tecnológica en el sector ferroviario. En esta entrevista da la clave para afrontar con éxito los retos inminentes del sector

* Publicamos la entrevista en el idioma original que ha sido realizada

What is Shift2Rail and how can it help companies in the railway sector in Spain?

Shift2Rail is, first, a body of the European Union which has the main objective to implement an ambitious rail Research and Innovation Programme, with inclusiveness, equal treatment and transparency. The Founding Members are at the core of the partnership, together with the Associated Members and third entities involved via different Calls; together they are behind the successful delivery of tangible results, framed in the Catalogue of Solutions 2019.

What are the main challenges for the sector at European level?

The main challenge for the sector comes from the complexity embedded in the rail system; only through a shared vision on the future concept of operations, supported by an understanding of the new functions and services needed by clients, will we be able to create a competitive European rail network. The future of the rail sector depends on the capacity to compete with other mobility and transport systems, taking advantage of its strengths and addressing its current limitations: capacity, cost-efficiency, information sharing, national barriers, etc. Shift2Rail and its successor are a unique opportunity for the sector to overcome the challenges in front of us.

Spain has been waiting decades for the liberalization of the market. And now it's here. What results should we expect in the short, medium and long term?

Competition has proved to be a major opportunity to accelerate innovation and address challenges with a different perspective. At the same time, each opportunity has costs associated to it: the overall benefit will come from creating value for the final user and the overall benefit of the value chain.

Let's talk about freight. In Europe only around 17% of goods are moved by train, despite it being the cleanest and most sustainable mode. Why? How can the situation be reversed?

Rail freight has demonstrated during the COVID crisis its strength and resilience, largely due to capacity availability in front of a reduction of passenger services. Consequently, as I mentioned before, the sector needs to reassess concepts of operations that are in place for decades. Research and innovation will provide the key technological and operational enablers to start such a transformation process. Nevertheless, it is not sufficient: there is a need to define clear migration and transition plans, accompanied as needed by relevant resources to bring innovative solutions to the market. The situation can change only via a shared approach resulting

Carlo Borghini:

“SHIFT2RAIL IS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES IN FRONT OF US”

from a combination of legislation, standards, concept of operations, technologies, etc. where research and innovation is one of the key enablers, that nevertheless needs to count on the clear role of all stakeholders involved. This means ensuring that rail offers clear services underpinning a strong logistic value chain addressing its barriers and works together with other modes in an integrated manner.

Innovation is a key element for business development. But is it available to all companies in the sector, including small and medium-sized ones? How can they face this effort that is always requested?

This is a perfect moment to put the subject on the table as the Commission is looking into the design, in all its aspects, of Horizon Europe and the successor of the Shift2Rail Research and Innovation Programme. Innovation is available to every entity, from the largest to the smallest; including Union funding as well. The main question is, to do what? It is fundamental to understand the company strategy versus the opportunities that are offered. Many times I am asked which are the conditions to become a member of Shift2Rail and my answer is always the same: what is your strategy; what is your research and innovation plan; where would you like to find yourself in 1, 3, or 5 years from now? It seems that when reference is made to Union programmes, focus is on the funding instead of how can I contribute to and benefit from this funding. There is no difference compared to the opportunity to benefit from any other investments, apart from the fact that Union funding has a specific attention to the European societal policies, in particular towards SMEs!

Which role can a cluster like Railgrup play?

A cluster can be an important partner to ensure the dissemination of opportunities, knowledge sharing, and the building of opportunities for participation. It should offer entities the chance to face the “administrative burden” by pre-digesting and understanding the requirements, in order to promote participation. The work of a cluster, with particular regard to Shift2Rail, is substantial in channelling needs and ideas, and alerting us to what's going on or what we are missing, and it should of course also work the other way round too.

Together we can deliver a transformed rail system and this starts from the economic reality of each sector, region and country.

railgrup

**HAZTE
SOCIO**

www.railgrup.net

info@railgrup.net | +34 93 415 98 65
Passeig de Sant Gervasi 27 - 08022 BARCELONA

