

Record volume in the first half of 2011

Exchange rate puts strain on combined transport via Switzerland

Chiasso, 28.7.2011 In the first half of 2011, the Swiss combined transport operator Hupac increased the traffic volume in unaccompanied combined transport by 11.7%. However, the strength of the Swiss franc compared to the euro is weakening the competitiveness of the railway against the road. For the NEAT flat railway, Hupac advocates a pragmatic, progressive adjustment of the access routes. In the growth market of Russia, Hupac intends to open a branch in autumn 2011.

Traffic development in the first half

In the first half of 2011, Hupac carried 375,893 road consignments on the trains of its European network, thus exceeding the record volume achieved in the same period of 2008. The route via the 4-metre Brenner corridor recorded particularly strong growth with an increase of 42.5%. There was also a pleasing trend in non-transalpine traffic, with a rise of 16.6%. Growth in transalpine traffic was more moderate (+ 6.5%).

Successful collaboration with SBB Cargo International

Even stronger growth was hindered by various shortages in the rail system. Accidents, storms, strikes and construction sites reduced the performance of the transport network. A number of rail connections had to be cut back or discontinued for lack of wagons. In contrast, the collaboration with SBB Cargo International, in which Hupac has held a minority stake since the beginning of the year, proved a success. The consistent rationalisation and standardisation of processes has proved effective and may yield the desired results in the interests of the market in the medium term.

Exchange rate threatens the modal shift process in Switzerland

Despite growth in the market, expectations for combined transport via Switzerland are cautious. This is due to the huge increase in the value of the Swiss franc compared to the euro. "The euro is the key currency in international road haulage and therefore also in combined transport," explains Bernhard Kunz, managing director of Hupac. "As a result of the exchange loss on the euro, revenues are falling drastically and they can no longer cover the costs of Swiss rail freight transport." Hupac is countering this with further cost optimisations and productivity increases. "Maintaining the competitiveness of combined transport against the road requires even closer cooperation between all partners in the transport chain," demands Kunz.

Intermodal corridor NEAT 2020: achieving the greatest benefit with modest means

The opening of the Gotthard base tunnel in 2017 and the Ceneri base tunnel in 2019 are expected to stimulate substantial growth in combined transport. However, the question of access routes is still unanswered. The existing lines can no longer meet the requirements of modern, efficient freight transport. Due to funding shortfalls, however, the building of new infrastructure cannot be expected in the foreseeable future. Hupac therefore advocates a pragmatic, progressive adjustment of the existing infrastructure. The existing access lines can be progressively expanded and prepared for modal shift with limited resources, so the advantages of the flat railway can be fully exploited as soon as the Gotthard base tunnel opens. The required steps include the cross-border expansion of infrastructure for train lengths of 750 metres and train heights of 4 metres. The Piattaforma Luino and Simplon Phase II must also be implemented rapidly and adjusted to meet the new requirements. According to Hupac, the priority should be on the intermodal corridors via Luino and Domodossola, as these serve the existing Busto Arsizio and Novara terminals and handle over 60% of combined transport traffic via Switzerland. With regard to the Chiasso-Seregno-Bergamo

route, terminals east of Milan with a capacity of 30 train pairs per day should be incorporated into the planning.

Well on the way in Russia

For the growth market of Russia, Hupac approved a common strategy with its long-term joint venture partner Russkaya Troyka in May 2011. The aim is the systematic enhancement of the existing combined transport service according to the proven business model of container transport from terminal to terminal. "In the medium term, we intend to establish regular block trains between the Atlantic and Pacific, thus offering the market a competitive, reliable alternative for the growing freight traffic flows," says Hupac's Managing Director Bernhard Kunz. To ensure better commercial and operational support for the traffic, Hupac will open a branch in Moscow in autumn 2011. The traffic volume shared between Hupac and Russkaya Troyka in 2010 was around 3,000 containers.

Traffic development in 1st half 2011	January-June 2011	January-June 2010	Change in %
Number of road consignments			
Transalpine via CH	225,741	211,881	6.5
Transalpine via A	27,495	19,292	42.5
Total transalpine	253,236	231,173	9.5
Non-transalpine	122,657	105,237	16.6
Total traffic	375,893	336,410	11.7

Rolling Highway: Outsourced to RAipin since 1.1.2011

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