

Rail Report Europe

in co-operation with
Back on Track

European network to support cross-border
night trains

Issue 1/2021

The Belt and Road Initiative of China A boost for Russian Railways?



Jochen Reitstätter

The official start of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative was in 2013, when Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China, announced the beginning of its worldwide infrastructure project. China claims to boost nothing less than the world economy along with a growth of wealth, not just for China, but for the world. The second crucial effect is the development towards a more open Chinese society, which is especially in the interest of the Western world.

Chances for other countries – boost for infrastructure development

Of course a major reason for a lot of countries to take part in China's giga project is the hope to attract investments in their infrastructure. Critics say this has to be paid with a loss of control over crucial parts of vital state infrastructure, and that China puts money in their own workers and companies also in foreign countries.

In the case of Russia the project bore another advantage, and this is the possibility to break out of current isolation on the world stage. The effects for Russian infrastructure and especially for the railway has to be focused on with a closer look.

So what is needed is to split the political from the economic and technical effects. In the following guest contribution by Russian Railways we get a closer look from an internal perspective within Russia.

For any questions beyond the article we can provide a contact to Russia Railways..



Especially in the huge vastness of the Russian East to run a railway is a very expensive endeavor and needs great investment.

Picture: Russian Railways

Guest contribution by Russian Railways



The Belt and Road Initiative is of particular interest for Russian Railways because it is aimed at developing infrastructure and transportation links between Europe and Asia to ensure the supply of Chinese goods to the European Union, as well as from European and neighbouring countries to the Asia-Pacific region.

The potential of the container transit market there is enormous. European experts, for example, estimate that the volume of freight traffic between China and the EU will be 40 million TEU by 2040 (<https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/217540/1/s41072-019-0048-3.pdf>). Due to the new infrastructural capabilities and quality of service, it is predicted that a



Picture: Russian Railways

significant volume of cargo will be switched to rail. The volume of European–Asian rail transit may additionally grow by 3 million TEU in the next 20 years, due in part by freight flows switching from other types of transportation, including maritime. The railways of post-Soviet states (primarily Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus) are a natural 'land bridge' connecting the largest economies of Europe and Asia. However, economic as well as geographical factors predetermine the key role of railway transportation for countries of the Eurasian Economic Union in carrying out the Belt and Road Initiative.

These conclusions are confirmed by statistics: in general, container transit on Russian railways at the end of last year reached a record value of 831,000 TEU, with a 34% increase by 2019. There was a 64% increase up to 570,000 TEU in the most popular direction, from east to west, for transit traffic between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region (first and foremost, China). Over the past six years, the volume of traffic in this direction has grown thirteen times.

The first months of this year indicate a further strengthening of this trend. Some freight traffic is switching to rail from maritime and automobile

transportation for reasons of higher reliability during the pandemic; regularity; tolerance of anti-epidemiological restrictions; and, last but not least, environmental friendliness, which has attracted more and more attention recently all over the world.

Today, the volume of greenhouse gas emissions from rail is half of that from maritime transportation, not to mention by automobile. Moreover, taking into account the increasing relevance of the environment for railway workers, opportunities are opening up to enter new promising global markets, for example, the transportation of electric vehicles and their parts. Russian Railways are carrying out systematic work to

Editorial committee

The Rail Report Europe is issued on a quarterly basis. The editorial team consists of Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ, and Jochen Reitstätter, Eisenacher Straße 44, 04105 Leipzig.

Composition and layout by CatchUp Public Relations, www.catchup-pr.com.

CatchUp
PUBLIC RELATIONS

improve transit services. Its focus is on developing infrastructure to increase throughput and reduce travel times and border operations.

The trunk infrastructure of Russian railways is generally sufficient to handle the freight traffic that is expected in the coming years. At the same time, on the main international transport corridors, measures are constantly being taken to increase the throughput and carrying capacity to ensure greater volumes. Most attention is focused on developing the Eastern section on the East–West international transport

corridor—which is where the maximum load is now—and the utilisation level of the infrastructure's capabilities will remain in the future.

We are constantly working to form the parameters of our investment programme and ensure priorities of development in accordance with the

decisions of the government and the needs of our clients. The investment programme of Russian Railways in 2021 will amount to over 730 billion roubles (about \$10 billion). In the period of 2021–2023, an excess of 2 trillion roubles (over \$30 billion) is envisaged.

A number of complex development projects are being implemented to ensure promising cargo flows, and they are included in the Comprehensive Plan for the Modernisation and Expansion of the Main Infrastructure and funded by the investment programme of Russian Railways. As part of the updated Comprehensive Plan in terms of railways, we can note projects such as the development of the Eastern section (Baikal–Amur and Trans–Siberian railways), approaches to the seaports of the Azov–Black Sea and Northwestern basins, and the Central Transport Hub. Measures to develop the railway

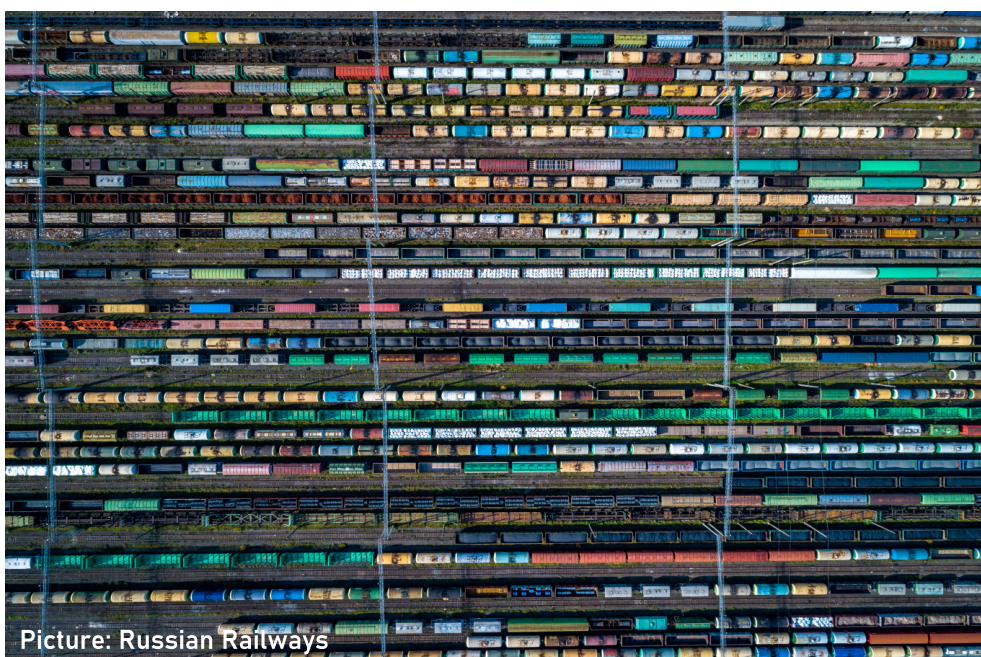
and logistics infrastructure on approaches to seaports and at border stations are being carried with funds from government programmes, Russian Railways and private investors to ensure the unimpeded passage of increasing cargo flows.

Increasing transit speeds and volumes is not done just by infrastructure modernisation programmes. In order to improve the capabilities of the Russian transportation system, Russian Railways are taking measures to optimise the technology used to interact with foreign railway carriers at border crossings and with sea

carriers in ports, improve the regulatory framework for international transportation, and implement a programme to develop digital infrastructure. One important component is optimising and digitalising the document flow between transportation participants and regulatory authorities through the introduction of

electronic and legal documents. This creates an end-to-end technology for sending waybills electronically.

The development of container traffic and the emerging trend towards its increase require changes and additions to the unified legal regulations of the EU customs authorities on recognizing SMGS, CIM and CIM/SMGS electronic consignment notes as customs documents. To



Picture: Russian Railways

The strengthening of the railway linkage between China and the European Union through Russia could mean a significant shift in the modal-split in favor of the rail.

Subscribe now!

You want to receive the Back-on-Track report automatically via email? Just subscribe for free and do not miss any more issues from now on.

Send us an email to:

rail-report-europe@catchup-pr.com

Rail Report Europe

speed up this issue, we look forward to getting support from the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG-MOVE) and the Directorate-General for Customs and Taxation (DG-TAXUD).

At the business level, issues of operational and electronic interactions are being resolved together with our partners in China-Europe transportation as part of a specialised seven-party working group. In particular, in 2020, the participants signed a memorandum on joint actions aimed at increasing the speed of container trains and reached agreements on the formation of end-to-end transportation schedules.

A practical study of technical and technological issues was also initiated for tracking cargo throughout the entire route using blockchain technology. This is an important step towards further developing digital interactions and creating a single information space for transportation between China and Europe.

It is important to note the work on replicating INTERTRAN information technology. As part of this project, the workflow for intermodal transportation from Asia-Pacific countries through the port of Vladivostok was digitalised. In 2020, this technology will be extended to the entire Russian Railways network, as well as to transit traffic to Belarus. Work is now being done to expand the geographical coverage to countries in Central Asia and Europe.

Balancing cargo flows between China and Europe by attracting European cargo to the railway remains a goal. Russian Railways sees significant potential in developing

the transit of so-called “sanctioned” products (food and agricultural products), primarily food products from Europe, which require monitoring using electronic navigation seals. Such goods have been being shipped by train to China since last year. The first train with dairy products travelled from Poland to Wuhan, China, in October 2020. The full-set formation of container trains using electronic seals is an opportunity for regular and expedited shipments by European food producers to consumers in China.

As for the German Federal Railway, it was and is the main centre for the formation of freight flows between China and Europe. In total, over 442,000 TEU of export/import and transit cargoes were transported by Russian railways to and from Germany last year.

Together with our partners from Germany, we are developing transit traffic through Kaliningrad, including multimodal (using the CIM/SMGS consignment note). Last year, new services were launched on the China-Kaliningrad-Hamburg route and, together with DB Cargo, between Xi'an and Duisburg through the Kaliningrad Sea Commercial Port. Shipments from Sweden to China have also been organised between the ports of Mukran and Baltiysk.

We can see the interest our German partners have in further developing European-Asian transit through the Russian Federation, and this area of cooperation has significant potential for growth.





Iberian Night Train Petition

By Trevor Garrod

Back-on-Track supporters in Spain and Portugal have launched a petition, in six languages, which gathered 3249 signatures in just ten days. You can access it via the Back-on-Track website <http://www.back-on-track.eu>

The petition states:

"We ask the Spanish, French and Portuguese Governments to consider not only resuming the recently stopped Portugal - France night train connection, but also extending it to a major train hub in Europe such as Paris (or potentially Brussels), instead of just reaching Hendaye on the French - Spanish border.

"We urge the Spanish and Portuguese Governments to order their national rail companies to join the declaration of December 8th made by SNCF, DB, OeBB and SBB in favour of building a new European night train network.

"Additionally, we urge the Spanish Government to study new night train links between the Iberian Peninsula and central/eastern Europe such as Barcelona - Frankfurt - Berlin and Barcelona - Milan - Rome."

You do not have to be a Portuguese, Spanish or French citizen in order to sign this petition. If you have used, or would like to use, a night train to travel to destinations in Spain and Portugal (as some of us British used to do, connecting out of a London - Paris Eurostar), why not add your signature to the petition?

BY RAIL TO THE COP

Large numbers of delegates, lobbyists and media people are expected to head to Glasgow for the next UN Climate Conference (COP 26), November 1st - 12th.

We hope that, where possible, they will do so by train. A Netherlands-based group is certainly trying to persuade them to do so. Read more about their proposals on <http://www.railtothecop.com> or contact them at info@railtothecop.com.

In Germany two travel agencies specialising in international rail are - Gleisnost in Freiburg-im-Breisgau - www.gleisnost.de and Bahnagentur Schöneberg in Berlin - <https://bahnagentur-schoeneberg.de>.



At Thisted in Denmark you can buy international tickets at <http://www.togrejse.dk>.

Meanwhile the European Rail Campaign (UK) (www.eurorailcampaignuk.org) has been in dialogue with British politicians stressing the importance of encouraging visitors to the Glasgow event to go by train as much as feasible.

The Association of European Rail Agents in the UK brings together specialists in international travel, and some of its members sell tickets to, as well as from, Great Britain. Log on to <http://www.aera.co.uk>

EU STUDY ON NIGHT TRAINS

At the end of 2020 the European Commission awarded to the British consultants Steer Davies Gleave, working also with a German consultancy, the contract to study the scope for international night trains. A report will be published in the autumn. It was stressed that the views of users would be sought.

Representatives of Back-on-Track have since had a productive videoconference with the responsible official in the Commission.

AND FINALLY:

"INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE NIGHT TRAINS?"

Back-on-Track Belgium has suggested an international day of night trains every year on December 4th - the day on which, in 1876, the Belgian Georges Nagelmackers established the famous Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits et des Grands Express Europeens. Back-on-Track will be discussing this at its next meeting. It could be a suitable climax to European Year of Rail.

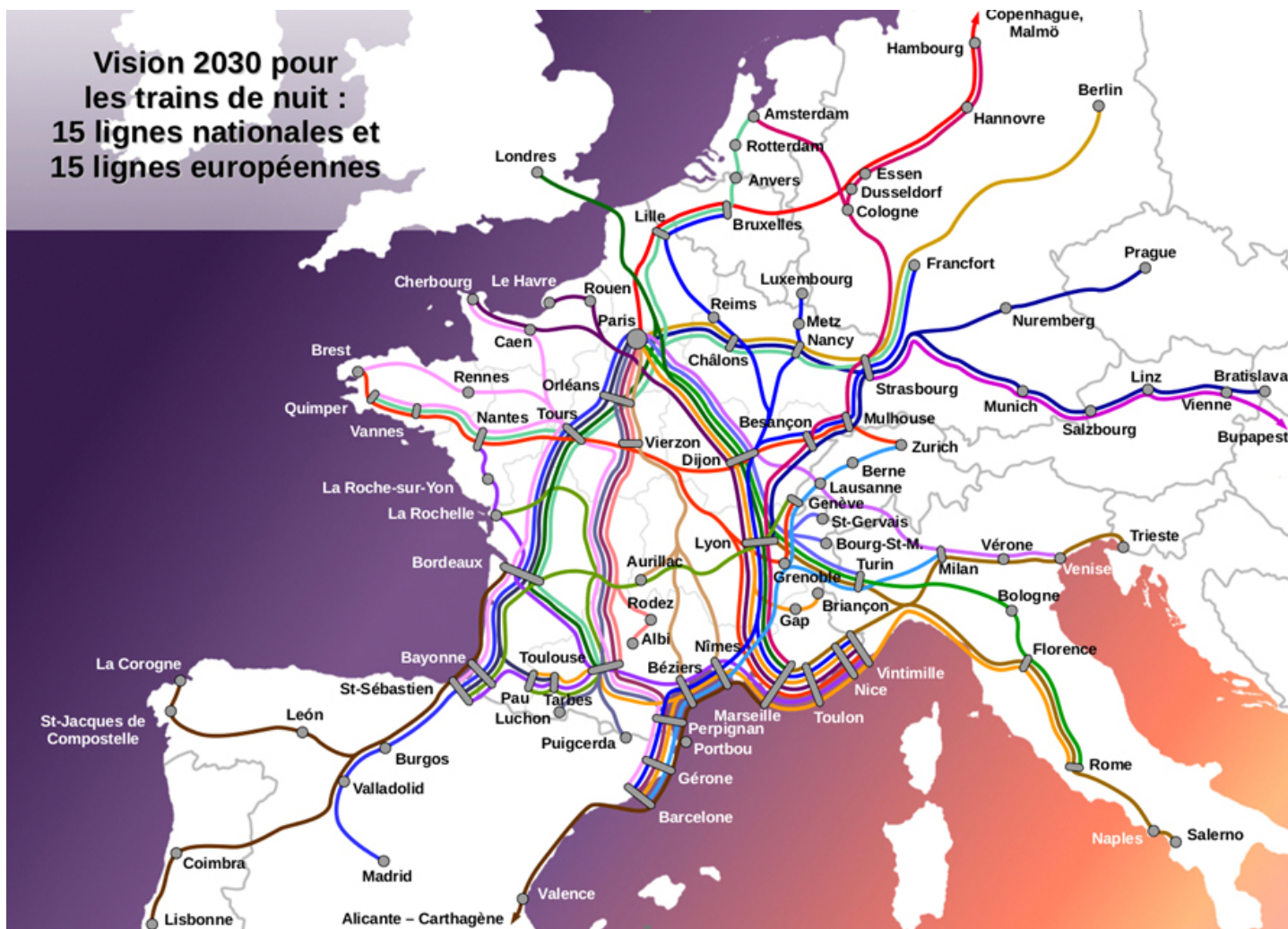


France to redevelop sleeper trains : The French transport minister wants ten overnight lines by 2030

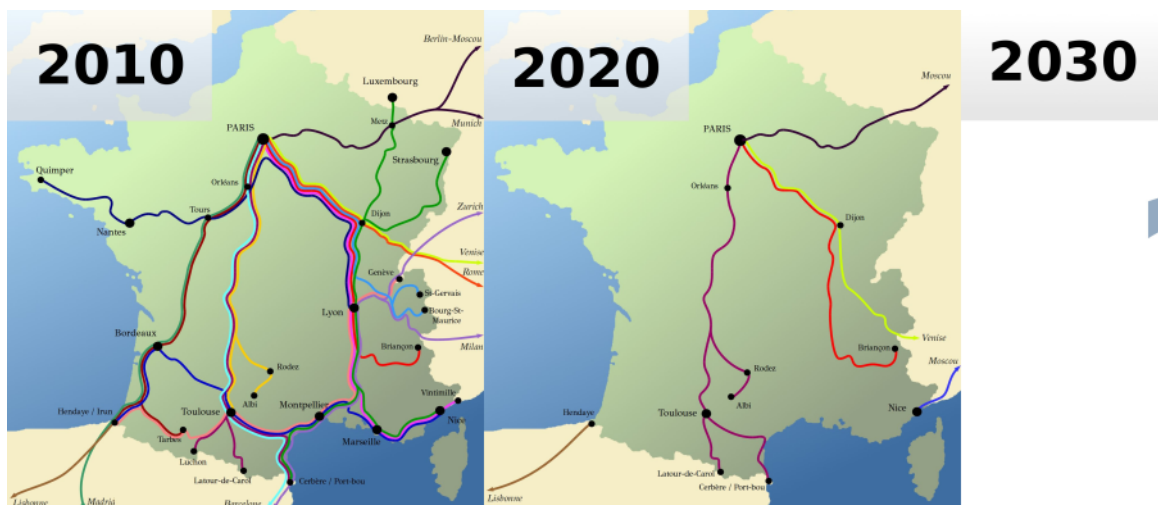
By Nicolas Forien.

After having been neglected for a long time, French overnight trains now seem ready to take a new start. In France, only two domestic night trains remain today (Paris-Briançon and Paris-Rodez/Toulouse-Latour-de-Carol/Portbou), but the French government is preparing a strategy to redevelop new night trains in the coming years.

This U-turn is motivated by the new public awareness about the climate impact of aviation, and is inspired by the success of the new international night trains network (« Nightjet ») developed by the Austrian national company ÖBB. The pandemic also stresses the need to better balance the transport offer in favour of smaller cities and rural areas, where more and more French people wish to live. Because the French high-speed



Sleeper train network suggested by "Oui au train de nuit" for 2030, with 15 national services and 15 european services. Map above and on page 7 above: <https://www.mobillette.com/mobizoom-85/>



network is very much centred on Paris, there is a lack of direct transverse overnight connections between remote regions (for example, the fastest train trip from Bordeaux to Nice is about 9 hours, which would be perfect for a night's sleep).

In July 2020, the French president Emmanuel Macron announced his intention to « redevelop night trains », starting with the comeback of Paris-Nice (April 2021) and Paris-Tarbes-Irun (Dec. 2021). An investment of 144 million € was decided to renovate 93 old SNCF couchette coaches, which includes the rolling stock necessary for the existing lines and these two new ones. More comfortable sleeper coaches might also be rented to offer a premium comfort level.

In addition to this, ÖBB has announced new connections to France in the coming years, including Paris-Munich-Vienna, Paris-Berlin and Zurich-Perpignan-Barcelona.

The French activists group « Oui au train de nuit » ("Yes to the night trains") welcomes this new development, which will be very positive for the climate and for the mobility between remote regions. To show the potential for

night trains to link the French regions between them and to connect them to Europe, the group proposes a vision for 2030 with 15 domestic overnight services (some of them slightly crossing the borders, for example to Geneva or Brussels), and 15 international services, going all the way to Lisbon, Naples or Budapest. For these lines, a possible timetable has been designed, and a study estimated that this network could attract more than 10 million passengers per year, mostly shifted from planes and cars, thus representing an important saving of Co2.

"Oui au train de nuit" urges the government to invest 1,5 billion € to create a pool of new rolling stock for night trains, and pushes for some important transverse



Picture: SNCF

People clapping their hands to celebrate a night train.

connections not to be forgotten, for example between Brittany (Rennes, Nantes, Quimper) and the South-West (Bordeaux, Toulouse, Perpignan, Hendaye), or between the South-West, Lyon and Geneva.

Picture: Geneve - besides New York the second headquarters of the United Nations and symbol of the merging of the countries of the world - like the night trains symbolise the merging of the European countries.

Picture: Katharina Wieland Müller / pixelio.de

www.back-on-track.eu



Coming soon – European Sleeper

The March zoom meeting of Back-on-Track had a very interesting presentation by Elmer van Buuren who, with Chris Engelsman, founded a company, European Sleeper, in January this year.

It will be an open access overnight train operator, and for the moment is looking to supplement, not compete with, existing operators.

European Sleeper will be a co-operative in which anyone can buy shares and thereby have a stake and, if they invest enough, also enjoy voting rights. Contracts are being negotiated with other companies for renting of rolling stock and provision of ancillary services such as cleaning and catering. Operating slots have to be applied for from infrastructure managers. Some countries are more ready than others to accept open access services. It is intended to make an announcement in April 2021 of the first route and then to operate the first service, from the Netherlands and Belgium, in April 2022, probably three times a week initially.

Both business and leisure markets will be served, and all customers will be welcome. Seating accommodation

may also be provided. Ticketing will be via the website <https://europeansleeper.eu> but also through existing operators and travel agencies. It is intended Interrail/Eurail passes will be accepted and through ticketing will be possible.

You can learn more about the progress of this innovative project by subscribing (via the website) to European Sleeper's electronic newsletter or by emailing info@europeansleeper.eu. It is expected that shares can be purchased from May this year.

E-Mail: info@europeansleeper.eu

Web: <https://www.europeansleeper.eu>

