

Shift2Rail Regulation adopted

16 Jun 2014

EUROPE: Meeting in Luxembourg on June 16, the European Union's Council of Ministers formally adopted the Regulation establishing the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking to lead rail research and development over the next six years.

Currently being co-ordinated by UNIFE on behalf of eight founding members and 130 other organisations across the rail sector, Shift2Rail is intended to create 'a step change in rail technology', which would enhance the capacity of Europe's railways to cope with rising demand, increase the reliability and quality of rail services, and reduce significantly the life-cycle cost of the railway system.

The programme is expected to see around €920m invested over the six years, of which €450m will come from the EU's Horizon2020 research budget, and the remainder from the industrial partners. Around 40% of the spending is expected to be allocated for the founding members, with 30% for associated companies and academic institutions in consortia, and the remaining 30% reserved for open calls.

The vote follows the issuing of 'positive opinions' by the European Economic & Social Committee in March and the European Parliament in April, and it marks the end of the legislative process. The decision paves the way for the start of a mobilisation process in order to have the joint technology initiative in operation by the beginning of 2015. Recruitment of a full-time Executive Director is expected to start this week.

Thanking the European institutions 'and especially the Greek Presidency' for supporting Shift2Rail and getting the Regulation adopted in little more than six months, UNIFE Director General Philippe Citroën, said it marked 'the culmination of years of preparation by a myriad of stakeholders'.