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Block trains for Bulgaria

Bulgaria's government is looking to throw its weight behind greater use of container rail freight.

In September, the first container block train arrived at the new intermodal terminal in Bulgaria's capital Sofia. The transport ministry is going to grant all-out support to the use of container trains, according to Deputy Minister of Transport and IT Kamen Kichev.

"These types of transport service are the future. They will receive the necessary support from the Transport and IT Ministry because the smaller amount of freight transported by road, the lower the harm to the environment in Bulgaria," Kichev said welcoming the block train to the new intermodal terminal at Yana station in Sofia. The pilot train carried 24 containers loaded in the Slovenian capital Ljubljana.

Until now, container block trains had only passed through Bulgaria but had never been used on Bulgarian territory because of the lack of terminal facilities with sufficient capacity.

Block trains involve shipping the same freight units from origin to destination to save time and money.

The first train was the result of a joint project between the state-owned company BDZ Freight Services and private firm Ecologistics to offer a new service transporting 40 ft containers from Ljubljana to Sofia. By the end of 2011, Yana railway station will process about 400 containers delivered by block trains from port of Koper which means that each week one container block



train will travel from Ljubljana to Sofia.

The full capacity of the Yana terminal will be achieved gradually, after the firms in charge of the project conclude their talks with six more intermodal operators over the processing of regular unit trains, the Transport Ministry added.

The Bulgarian government has recently confirmed the intention of the Transport Ministry to allow the privatisation of BDZ Freight Services, first announced in August 2011.

According to BDZ CEO Yordan Nedev, the privatisation process has not been organised yet, and the only thing clear at present is that BDZ Freight Services'

assets are valued at about BGN320 million.

The freight services of the Bulgarian state railways BDZ have traditionally been its most profitable unit, and past governments have used freight revenues to cover mounting deficits in passenger services.

Dunkirk



Rail Link Europe (RLE) is a weekly container rail service with 80 TEU capacity, between Dunkirk port's Flanders Terminal and the Bonneuil-Sur-Marne terminal south of the Greater Paris region. RLE's aim is to provide a transport offer for the market in the southeastern suburbs of Paris. This new link, scheduled to start in 2012, will synchronise with the call for vessels at Dunkirk and offer overnight, already benefiting from simplified Customs procedures. The operator plans to invest

Slovenia's Danube connection

The Austrian ports of Enns and Vienna on the river Danube are reinforcing their co-operation with the Slovenian seaport of Koper. At a joint presentation in Portoroz, Slovenia, representatives of the two inland ports emphasised the growing importance of the northern Adriatic for Austria's industry.

Monika Unterholzner, international manager of Port of Vienna, and Christian Steindl, managing director of Enns, considered port of Koper as

hinterland transport on by rail, the services between Koper and Enns/Port of Vienna are being expanded. Two container trains per week now operate from Vienna to Koper. With the 2012 change of the schedule the Enns port will be connected by a daily train to Cargo Center Graz and can thus offer feeder connections for container shipments to Koper thanks to a link with NINA (National Intermodal Network Austria). Implemented in April this year.

Sweden service

Norwegian rail freight operator CargoNet has decided to close its domestic intermodal trains within Sweden as from timetable change 2011/2012. The company cited the main reasons as "failing results, as well as an infrastructure and terminals that had not worked as intended".

"We are in dialogue with other suppliers in the transport industry to explore their potential to take over parts of our network in Sweden," read a company statement. "Our desire is to help ensure that both our customers and our employees in Sweden have the best possible situation and transition from 11 December this year."

CargoNet is now concentrating on its transport network within Norway, between Norway and Sweden, and to/from the Continent. It will continue to run shuttle trains on the lines Oslo-Malmoe, Oslo-Gothenburg and Oslo-Narvik through Sweden. In addition it

