

They are fighting for the railway in Brussels

In a series, Tagesspiegel Background introduces influential EU lobbyists in the mobility sector. The last part is about the rail industry. It is very diverse, and the interests represented in Brussels are correspondingly different.



by Jens Tartler

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"The **rail industry** has as many **associations** as **Jesus has disciples**," says **Enno Wiebe with a wink**. He has been **Director General of the European Railway Industry Association** for six months, which is of course based in Brussels. Rail transport is already important and, according to the wishes of the designated EU Transport Commissioner **Apostolos Tzitzikostas**, is set to become even more important.

All twelve important associations in the industry would probably agree to this. But as soon as topics such as **competition** on the railways, the **separation of network and operations** or a **uniform booking system** for tickets are addressed, different opinions become apparent - especially between the state railways and their competitors. The competitors are represented by **Allrail** for passenger transport and by **Erfa** for freight transport. Because of the importance of **Deutsche Bahn** in Brussels, Tagesspiegel Background presents the representatives of the largest German state-owned company alongside the lobbyists of the most important associations.

Christoph Lerche (Deutsche Bahn)

The **head of transport policy in Europe** at Deutsche Bahn (DB) has been working for the company for almost 19 years. **Christoph Lerche**, a fully qualified lawyer, has worked his way up step by step and has always dealt with political and regulatory issues. Lerche is in constant contact with **Johann Metzner**, who heads the office in Brussels. DB also has a prominent dropout from politics in its ranks: **Ismail Ertug**, SPD member of the **European Parliament** from 2009 to 2023, calls himself Commissioner for Sustainable Mobility Europe. In an interview with Tagesspiegel Background, Ertug emphasizes that he is not a lobbyist, but advises the DB Board of Management and Head of Policy **Frank Miram**.

Enno Wiebe (Unife)

Enno Wiebe has been working in the rail industry for over 25 years, first at **DB**, then at various European associations. The German has recently been working for the **Union des Industries Ferroviaires Européennes** (Unife), which means the Association of the European Railway Industry. The chairman of Unife is **Michael Peter**, CEO of **Siemens Mobility**.

The association has represented the European rail supply industry since 1992. Members include associations such as the German **Railway Industry Association**, but also more than 100 large and medium-sized companies. According to the association, these have a market share of 80 percent in Europe and more than 50 percent worldwide. In addition to Siemens, the list includes **Alstom**, **Skoda**, **Hitachi** and **ABB**. Unife is currently negotiating a return of **Stadler**.

Wiebe, a railway engineer, is working on the **technical specifications** for the interoperability of trains in Europe, for example. He regularly works with the **European Railway Agency** in Valenciennes. He stresses that **Switzerland** is also very actively involved in European legislation and meticulously implements common standards. Because the topics of **cybersecurity**, positioning of trains via **satellite** and **drones** for monitoring tracks and structures are becoming increasingly important, Unife also works closely with the **European Aviation Safety Agency** and the **European Space Agency**.

Alberto Mazzola (CER)

Both Ismail Ertug and Enno Wiebe consider Alberto Mazzola to be the most important rail lobbyist in Brussels. The Italian has been Director General of the **Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies** (CER) since 2021. It was founded in Brussels in 1988 and represents infrastructure companies such as Germany's **DB InfraGO** as well as almost 70 railway companies, vehicle leasing companies and national railway associations. The range could hardly be greater. CER has members not only in the 27 EU countries, but also in Great Britain, Switzerland, Norway, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina; additionally partners in **Georgia**, Israel, Moldova and **Ukraine**.

Mazzola holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and a PhD in Nuclear Engineering from the Politecnico of Milan. In 2002, he joined the **Italian state railway company FS**, where he rose to become Head of the International Governmental Affairs Department in Brussels.

Nick Brooks (Allrail)

The Allrail association is a non-profit organization and represents **independent passenger transport companies** and **ticket retailers**. That is why Allrail has been campaigning for competition on the rails and a uniform ticket booking system since 2017. The common goal of the 17 Allrail members is the creation of a **uniform European internal rail market**, which is "still a long way from being achieved" after four EU railway packages, says Secretary General Nick Brooks in a **background portrait**. He is fighting against the **state railway lobby** and sees the **Czech Republic** rather than his home country of Great Britain as a **role model when it comes to liberalization**. Brooks studied German and political science in Newcastle. He then began as a trainee at the **Tui** Group in Hanover and later moved to the US airline **Frontier Airlines in Denver**. **When the company almost went bankrupt in the financial crash in 2008, he lost his job and returned to Germany. There he was Head of Sales at the Hamburg-Cologne Express** for three years.

François Davenne (UIC)

The **International Union of Railways** (French: Union Internationale des Chemins de fer, UIC) is not a European association, its catchment area is the whole world. The UIC was **founded in Paris in 1922** to improve the conditions of construction and operation of railways for international traffic through **standardization**. **It had 51 founding members from 29 countries, including China and Japan**. Russia and Belarus have been suspended since the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

François Davenne has been the Director General of the UIC since July 2019. Davenne studied at the French elite university **Ena**, among others. He worked in international **satellite communications**, but he also worked in the **housing sector** and managed programs for the city of Paris. After three years at the French Ministry of Transport, where he worked in the field of safety and in particular the European regulation of rail transport, he was elected Secretary General of the **Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail** (OTIF) in 2012.

Gilles Peterhans (UIP)

The so-called freight wagon keepers play an important role in rail freight transport. Many logistics and rail transport companies do not use their own wagons, but rented or leased ones. The association for this specific industry is the **International Union of Wagon Keepers** (UIP), which was founded in Brussels in 1950. The UIP is the umbrella organization of national associations from fourteen European countries and represents more than 250 freight wagon keepers with a good **238,000 freight wagons**, which account for **50 percent of the rail freight tonnage kilometers** throughout Europe. Important topics are technology, maintenance and more efficient logistics chains.

Gilles Peterhans, a Swiss national, has been Secretary General of UIP since the end of 2012. The economist from the **University of St. Gallen** has worked for various companies in the rail sector in his home country, including **RTS Rail Traction Services**.

Mohamed Mezghani (UITP)

The International Union of Public Transport (UITP) occupies a special position between the infrastructure operators, the railway companies and the railway technology manufacturers. The UITP represents the interests of public transport worldwide. It has more than **450 operators and authorities** of urban, suburban and regional public transport in its ranks.

Its Secretary General since 2018 is **Mohamed Mezghani**, a Tunisian and French national. He has worked in public transport for more than 30 years and is hailed by UITP as a "passionate advocate of urban mobility worldwide". Before becoming Secretary General, Mezghani headed the department for **knowledge-related services** such as vocational training, research projects, studies, technical advice, conferences, networking activities, information centers. From 2006 to 2013, he worked as an independent consultant for UITP on several technical **assistance and training projects** in **Africa** and the **Middle East**.

Today, the industrial engineer and transport scientist focuses primarily on urban mobility policy and transport demand management, trends and innovations, the legal framework and energy efficiency of urban transport.

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