

# International Organizations for Rail Transport: Genesis and Evolution

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This article addresses the origins and evolution of international organizations dedicated to international rail transport. From the beginning of rail history, most of the railway networks in Europe were built by numerous private companies, which continuously competed and collaborated with each other within domestic transport as well as international transport.

European railway companies made connections across borders based on personal and financial network relationships and established various types of agreements and unions to make international traffic possible. This coalition allowed them to jointly operate member networks, including running direct trains and establishing tariff agreements. Since international transport has grown in size and complexity, international railway organizations have continuously evolved.

This study proceeds as follows: the first section outlines the beginnings and development of international rail transport organizations. With the expansion of the rail network in Europe, international cooperation in the field of railways occurred early in the 19th century. This mainly took the form of bilateral or multilateral agreements or even treaties among the States. Initially, these agreements affected the establishment of international organizations. The second section draws out international organizations between the First World War and the Second World War. In the interwar period, the existing organizations continued to expand their scope of activities and new organizations were founded. The third section examines the impact of the Cold War on international rail organizations. During the Cold War, many organizations were established in Western Europe, with active international railway cooperation. In Eastern Europe, a new international organization was established under the influence of the Soviet Union. The fourth section explains changes in international organizations after the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the existing organizations steadily adapted themselves to changes in the political, economic, social, cultural and technological environments. Because of these various changes, new international organizations also emerged.

*Keywords:* international organisations, rail transport, VDEV, UIC, OSJD, OTIF, ERA.

## Introduction

International rail transport began in the early 19th century, bringing about a number of uniform rules in technical specifications and relevant regulations that had to be agreed in advance and maintained consistently. Since the beginning of rail history, international organizations for rail transport have been established to combat the problems of cross-border traffic. During the First World War, international railway organizations could not function in international transport. However, after the war, political developments gave new impetus to international railway organizations. The existing organizations continued to expand their activities and new organizations were established to facilitate international transport. During the Cold War, a new international organization based on the Eastern Bloc was established in the Eastern part of Europe. After the Cold War, international organizations were influenced by changes in the political and economic circumstances. To date, international organizations have been constantly evolving to adapt to a challenging environment in international rail transport.

### Genesis and Development of International Organizations for Rail Transport in the 19th century

The Industrial Revolution saw a major shift of technological, socioeconomic and cultural conditions in the late 18th and early 19th century, beginning in Britain and spreading throughout the world.<sup>1</sup> The rise of industry depended on the ability to transport raw materials and finished goods over long distances. The construction of major railways connecting cities and towns in the 1830s helped Britain's trade enormously, providing a quick and easy way of transport.<sup>2</sup> The railways changed British society in numerous and complex ways and helped the industrial revolution in France by facilitating access to a national market for raw materials, wines, cheeses and other manufactured imports and exports.<sup>3</sup>

The main impact of the railway on the Industrial Revolution was to encourage industrial growth by giving manufacturers a cheap way of transporting material and finished products. Railways created hundreds of thousands of new jobs for both railway workers and miners and allowed people to take distant city jobs by making the commute between cities easier. It also helped the agricultural and fishing industries, which could transport their products to distant cities.

The 1860s saw an explosion of growth in European railway network construction and traffic. In 1910, Europe had a railway network that connected the major cities. The development of rail traffic was successfully achieved through international cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> N. Tontini, 'The Industrial Revolution Presentation', *SlideShare*, 2009, <https://www.slideshare.net/nictnt/the-industrial-revolution-presentation-1247384> (accessed on 30 October 2017).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> *History of Rail Transport*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_rail\\_transport](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_rail_transport) (accessed on 2 November 2017).

Before the First World War, passenger travel and freight carriage in Europe had reached an advanced stage with the growth of the European railway network.<sup>4</sup>

The first international railway organization, the Association of German Railway Companies (VDEV, Verein Deutscher Eisenbahn Verwaltungen), was founded in 1847 with the initial goal to standardize the regulations for carriage and traffic between the Prussian State Railways.<sup>5</sup> The organization, which initially began as the Union of Prussian Railway Administrations, then extended to include all German-speaking states and later dealt with certain aspects of transport between Austria-Hungary, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Romania.<sup>6</sup> Many similar unions existed at this time, especially in Germany, due to its many state borders and numerous private companies. These unions tried to create more optimized routes by joint operation of their goods traffic and through the construction of new lines.<sup>7</sup>

However, these kinds of organizations were initially limited in terms of their geographical scope. None had the power to develop international transport freely. If international traffic was to improve, there must be some foundation in the form of an international agreement upon technical standards and some agreed legislation outlining the obligation of railways to one another and to the public. In consideration of those circumstances, there was an attempt to standardize physical factors in the exchange and conveyance of rolling stock. Furthermore, there was an effort to establish uniform commercial conditions for international transport.

The International Conference for Railway Technical Unity (UT, Unité Technique) was held in Bern in 1882 at the initiative of the Swiss government and was attended by representatives of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland.<sup>8</sup> The 1882 Protocol laid down the conditions for rolling-stock passing between the countries, together with provisions relating to gauge, clearance, etc. A second conference (10 states) was held in Bern in 1886 and a third (16 states) in 1907. The regulations of 1907 were revised in 1911 and 1912. All continental European governments whose main-line railways were of standard gauge joined the organization. The organization was restructured by international agreement in 1938 and abolished when the Convention Concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF) in 1999 entered into force. The aim of the organization was to standardize conditions and rules governing railway track and rolling stock with a view to developing international traffic.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A. Mitchell, *The Great Train Race: Railways and the Franco-German Rivalry, 1815–1914*, New York: Berghahn, 2000, pp. 142–144.

<sup>5</sup> J. Schot, H. Buitter, I. Anastasiadou, 'The Dynamics of Transnational Railway Governance in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century', *History and Technology*, 2011, vol. 27 (3), pp. 265–289, p. 268.

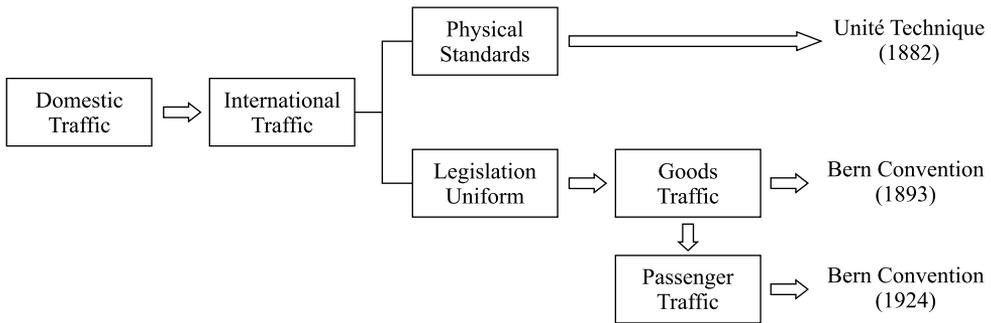
<sup>6</sup> R.L. Wedgwood, J.E. Wheeler, *International Rail Transport*, London: Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 64–67.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Union of International Associations, 'International Conference for Railway Technical Unity (UT)' <https://www.uia.org/ybio?name=&=Search> (accessed on 10 September 2016).

However, uniformity in the commercial conditions of international goods transport took longer to accomplish. It was attained with the Bern Convention of 1890 and through the foundation of the Central Office for International Railway Transport in 1893.



**Figure 1.** Genesis of International Organizations for Rail Transport

Source: Own study.

In terms of international rail transport, the first draft of an international treaty on railways was developed in 1874.<sup>10</sup> The Swiss government introduced the first move to create an inter-governmental understanding on the commercial conditions of rail transport. The Swiss government invited the governments of four neighbouring countries to a conference for the unification of legal provisions governing the carriage of goods by rail. A series of inter-governmental meetings was held in Bern from 1876 onwards, as the range of discussions grew considerably. The International Convention Concerning the Carriage of Goods by Rail (CIM) was drawn up in 1890 and entered into force in 1893.

The International Rail Transport Committee (CIT, Comité international des transports ferroviaires)<sup>11</sup> was founded in 1902 in Vienna (Austria) as an organ of railway and other transport undertakings adhering to the International Convention Concerning the Carriage of Goods by Rail (CIM). Shortly after CIM became effective, the railway companies of most of its member states found it necessary to cooperate more closely to facilitate practical implementation of the Convention. Since its adoption, the functions of CIT extended to cover the whole field of development of international law based on the Bern Conventions and the uniform regulation of other questions relating to international transport. The objective of the association was to help railways apply the convention concerning the carriage of goods consistently and subsequently also the parallel convention on the carriage of passengers and luggage. The management

<sup>10</sup> B.J. Houssiau, *Marc Allégret: Découvreur de Stars: Sous Les Yeux d'André Gide*, Cabédita, 1994.

<sup>11</sup> See: <http://www.cit-rail.org>. CIT, *History*, <http://www.cit-rail.org/en/objectives/> (accessed on 19 September 2016).

of CIT, undertaken by the Austrian State Railways until 1914, was taken over by the Swiss Federal Railways in 1921. CIT was set up as a legal entity in its own right in 2004 and is now an association under Swiss law based in Bern.

The International Railway Congress Association (IRCA) was founded in Brussels (Belgium) in 1884. The purpose of the organization was to promote the exchange of experience and knowledge among members by holding congresses, disseminating information and publishing technical reviews. Its current rules and regulations were adopted in 1971, were registered by Belgian Royal Decree in 1939, and ceased to exist in 2005.<sup>12</sup>

The International Association of Public Transport (UITP, Union Internationale de Tramways / Internationale Permanenter Strassenbahn)<sup>13</sup> was established in 1885 with 63 member companies such as tramway operators from nine countries in Europe. Over the years UITP adapted its structure and broadened its focus to become more inclusive of the entire public transport sector. Today, UITP represents some 1400 member companies and gives access to over 18,000 contacts from the fields of urban, local, regional and national mobility across over 96 countries on all the continents.

### **Expansion of International Organizations for Rail Transport in the Interwar Period**

During the First World War, international railway traffic and international railway organizations stagnated. After the war, all railway systems in Europe were left exhausted. However, the end of the war signalled not only the beginning of a new period in the socio-political history of Europe, but also a new period for international railway organizations.

The connection to Asia was established by the participation of Russia in the Bern Convention. An important amendment to the Bern Convention regarding international rail carriage of goods was made after the First World War in 1923. At the amendment conference in 1923, a treaty for the international rail carriage of persons was signed. The predecessors of the Uniform Legal Provisions for the Treaty on the International Transport of Goods by Rail (CIM) and the Uniform Legal Provisions for the Treaty on the International Transport of Persons and Baggage by Rail (CIV) were created. They both came into effect on 1 October 1928 and applied to all European states with the exception of Great Britain, Turkey, Lithuania, and the Soviet Union, which no longer participated in these treaties.

Former international organizations continued to exist independently and expanded their functions. New organizations, on the other hand, were established with the aim

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<sup>12</sup> Union of International Associations, *International Railway Congress Association (IRCA)*, <https://www.uia.org/s/or/en/1100009006> (accessed on 6 July 2016).

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.uitp.org>. UITP (Advancing Public Transport), *History*, <http://www.uitp.org/history> (accessed on 18 June 2016).

of reviving international transport and creating a better coordinated and more effective instrument for the future development of international transport relations. In particular, two new international organizations were formed to tackle issues related to international railway traffic in the immediate post-First World War period. These were the Organization for Communication and Transit and the International Union of Railways (UIC, Union internationale des chemins de fer).<sup>14</sup> Throughout the interwar period, these bodies cooperated closely with each other and with the international bodies established in the previous period in handling different issues relating to the regulation and promotion of international railway traffic.<sup>15</sup>

In 1920, the Council of the League at Rome agreed to hold the Conference on Communications and Transit the following year at Barcelona. At this conference, a scheme for a permanent Communications and Transit Organization was approved. This Organization appointed an Advisory and Technical Committee, and this Committee then appointed a Sub-Committee for Transport by Rail.<sup>16</sup> This organization, consisting of government representatives, functioned in the same conditions as the Bern Convention. Article 24 of the Convention put the already established ‘international bureau’ under the influence of the League. Considering these conditions, the Organization for Communication and Transit became an advisory or consultative body, despite being an intergovernmental organization. This organization focused on special questions relating to frontier sections of railway lines and frontier stations after boundary changes between states. The Bern Union took responsibility for developing international traffic by rail at the governmental level.

A major development when it comes to international organizations was the establishment of the International Union of Railways (UIC) on the administration level, not state level. This organization was established in Paris (France) in 1922, following inter-governmental conferences at Portorose (Yugoslavia) and Genoa (Italy).<sup>17</sup> The conferences recommended that as a first step, the French railway administrations should convene a conference of technical representatives of all the European railway administrations with the object of restoring international traffic and creating a permanent conference of railway administrations to deal with questions of construction, equipment and operation.

UIC was founded as an international non-governmental organization with the original goal of focusing on cooperation and standardization within one organization. It had its own research institute which could be used by members to conduct collaborative

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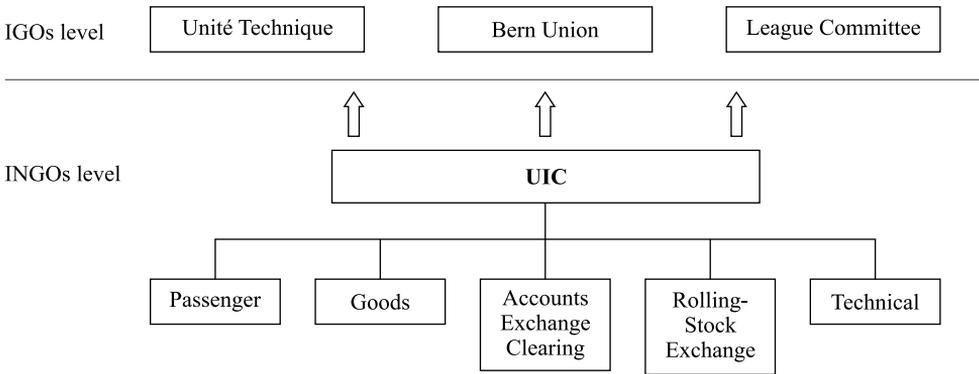
<sup>14</sup> See: <http://www.uic.org>. UIC, *History*, <http://www.uic.org/1922-UIC-a-long-life-organization> (accessed on 13 June 2016).

<sup>15</sup> I. Anastasiadou, ‘International Railway Organization in 19th and 20th Century Europe’, *Transport and Mobility Conference*, Transnational Infrastructures of Europe, 2007, pp. 15–16.

<sup>16</sup> Wedgwood and Wheeler, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> Union of International Associations, *International Union of Railway: UIC*, <https://www.uia.org/ybio?name=&=Search> (accessed on 3 May 2016).

research projects. UIC also supported the creation and activities of several other non-governmental organizations established as joint ventures or cooperation between operators. In particular, cross-border cooperation became possible by establishing a number of specialized organizations linked directly or indirectly with UIC.<sup>18</sup>



**Figure 2.** Relations between UIC and other organizations

Source: Own study.

In 1979, UIC took over the activities of the International Wagon Union (RIV), set up in 1921. UIC was the first general international rail transport organization to be created after the First World War. An effort was made to associate it with the various organizations already handling the technical and commercial aspects of railway traffic. As an integrated organization, UIC could only make suggestions to intergovernmental organizations such as the League Committees, UT, or the Bern Union. UIC had done the work of technical standardization proper to UT.

Currently, the aims of UIC are expanding to promote rail transport at world level and meet the challenges of mobility and sustainable development; facilitate the sharing of best practices among members; support members in their efforts to develop their business and new areas of activity; propose new ways of improving technical and environmental performance; promote interoperability; create new world standards for railways; and develop centres of competence and excellence.

<sup>18</sup> G. Ambrosius, Ch. Henrich-Franke, *Integration of Infrastructures in Europe in Historical Comparison*, Springer, 2015, p. 85.

## **Universalisation and Differentiation of International Organizations for Rail Transport during the Cold War**

Major European States had been left ruined due to the Second World War, and two main blocs emerged around the Soviet Union and the USA. The new political and economic conditions after the Second World War affected international rail transport. Nevertheless, it was the period when international organizations related to railways were most actively established. In Western Europe, international railway cooperation was restored quickly with the help of many international organizations.

However, a new international organization based on the Eastern Bloc was established in Eastern Europe. Soviet leaders thought of Eastern Europe as an extension of their own country. Threats to the security of an East European communist regime due to external or internal factors were regarded as threats to Soviet security.<sup>19</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the Western Bloc was established in 1949. The Warsaw Pact was created in 1955 and was believed to have been motivated by Soviet desires to maintain control over the military forces in Central and Eastern Europe. The Warsaw Pact and NATO defined both the Cold War and the international order limited to blocs such as Western or Eastern Europe.

In 1951, the Treaty on International Goods Transport by Rail (SMGS) came into effect and was mainly applied in the socialist States.<sup>20</sup> A considerable proportion of the world railway network fell within the area of application of this treaty. In 1956, the Organization for the Cooperation between Railways (OSJD, Organizatsiya Sotrudnichestva Zheleznih Dorog),<sup>21</sup> was established as the association of East European and Asian railway companies. It commenced work on 1 January 1957 and was based in Warsaw. Its members were the railway companies of the participating states, represented by their transport ministries or the responsible central authority for railways. The aims of the OSJD were to improve standards and cooperation in implementing railway traffic between the countries of Europe and Asia, including the transport of goods; to improve cooperation on problems related to traffic policy and economic and ecological aspects of railway traffic; and to ensure the enforcement of conventions and agreements, including the Convention Concerning International Passenger Traffic by Railway (SMPS), the Convention on International Freight Traffic by Railway (SMGS), the International Passenger Tariff (MPT), the International Transit Tariff (MTT), the Regulation of the Use of Freight Wagons in International Traffic

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<sup>19</sup> M. Kramer, 'The Demise of the Soviet Bloc', *The Journal of Modern History*, 2011, vol. 83 (4), pp. 788–854, p. 788.

<sup>20</sup> The agreements, rules and tariffs of the Treaty were approved by the railways of the People's Republic of Albania, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the People's Republic of Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Poland, the Socialist Republic of Romania, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

<sup>21</sup> See: <http://en.osjd.org>, OSJD, *Organization for Co-Operation between Railways (OSJD) – 60 Years*, [http://en.osjd.org/statico/public/en?STRUCTURE\\_ID=5050](http://en.osjd.org/statico/public/en?STRUCTURE_ID=5050) (accessed on 10 October 2017).

(PGW), the Regulation on the Use of Passenger Wagons in International Traffic (PPW), the Standard Transit Tariff (ETT), agreements relating to accounting in international transport of passengers and goods and other regulations.<sup>22</sup> The foregoing agreements, rules and tariffs became effective on 1 November 1951.

In Western Europe, the Convention on International Railway Transport (COTIF, Convention relative aux transports internationaux ferroviaires) was concluded in Bern in 1980. This international treaty provided schedules and conditions for the transport of persons and goods. Initially, 25 states participated in COTIF and coordinated the Intergovernmental Organization for International Railway Transport (OTIF, Organisation intergouvernementale pour les transports internationaux ferroviaires)<sup>23</sup>. OTIF oversees the adjustment of legal provisions to current developments in the transport sector. As decided upon in 1980, COTIF came into effect in 1985 and was fundamentally revised in 1999 with the Vilnius Protocol. The institutional provisions of COTIF constitute the framework conditions for transport. However, actual legal regulations pertaining to transport are prescribed in the CIV and CIM schedules. The convention is applicable in many European states, including all EU member states, Malta, and Cyprus. Even in some states in North Africa and the Near East COTIF and its schedules are the basis of cross-border transport. The aims of OTIF are to create a uniform legal system for international rail transport and facilitate and ensure its execution and development; to establish a complete codification of international transport law in respect of carriage of goods and passengers by rail (CIM/CIV); to meet the needs of carriage by more than one mode of transport, in particular rail-sea, which is constantly evolving as a result of the growth and improvement of multi-modal means of transport. Additional aims under COTIF 1999 were to establish uniform legal systems for the contract of use of wagons as a means of transport in international rail traffic and the contract of use of infrastructure in international rail traffic and carriage of dangerous goods; to contribute to the removal of obstacles in border crossing within the responsibility of states; to ensure interoperability and technical harmonization; and to establish a uniform procedure for technical approval of railway equipment.

The establishment of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)<sup>24</sup> was recommended by the Temporary Sub-Commission on the Economic Reconstruction of Devastated Areas, which convened in London and reported to the Economic and Social Council in 1946. Since its creation in 1947, the UNECE Inland Transport Committee has been a framework for intergovernmental cooperation and concerted action to facilitate international transport while improving safety and environmental performance. The main results of the quiet, unspectacular, but persevering and useful

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<sup>22</sup> See: Section 3, Annexes to this Convention, Article 8 (General Provisions regulating international through railway traffic 1).

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://otif.org/en>. OTIF, *Mission*, [https://otif.org/en/?page\\_id=3](https://otif.org/en/?page_id=3) (accessed on 17 May 2016).

<sup>24</sup> See: <https://www.unece.org>. UNECE, *Rail Transport*, <http://www.unece.org/trans/main/sc2/sc2.html> (accessed on 12 June 2016).

work of the UNECE member governments, acting together for almost five decades now within the framework of the Committee, are reflected in 57 international agreements and conventions which provide the international legal and technical framework for the development of international road, rail, inland waterway and combined transport in the UNECE region.

As the European Community institution was one of the most original features of European integration. In its framework The Commission's Mobility and Transport DG has been very active in restructuring the European rail transport market in order to strengthen the position of railways vis-à-vis other transport modes. The Commission's efforts have concentrated on three major areas which are all crucial for developing a strong and competitive rail transport industry: 1) opening the rail transport market to competition, 2) improving the interoperability and safety of national networks, and 3) developing rail transport infrastructure.

The European Committee for Standardization (CEN, Comité européen de normalisation)<sup>25</sup> was established in 1961 in Paris (France) as the European Standards Coordinating Committee in succession to the Common Market and Free Trade Area Committee set up in October 1957 and reconstituted on 13 June 1975 in Brussels (Belgium).

CEN is an association that brings together the national standardization bodies of 34 European countries, and one of three European standardization organizations (together with CENELEC and ETSI) that have been officially recognized by the European Union and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) as holding power over developing and defining voluntary standards at the European level. CEN provides a platform for the development of European standards and other technical documents regarding various products, materials, services and processes. Furthermore, it supports standardization for a wide range of fields and sectors including: air and space, chemicals, construction, consumer products, defence and security, energy, the environment, food and feed, health and safety, healthcare, ICT, machinery, materials, pressure equipment, services, smart living, transport, and packaging.

The International Institute for Transport Law (IDIT, Institut du droit international des transports)<sup>26</sup> was created in 1969 to study all legal, economic and technical questions relating to all types of transport, both national and international. It deals with surveys and research relating strictly to legal problems, including case law and doctrinal analysis.

The International Union of Combined Road-Rail Transport Companies (UIRR, Union internationale des sociétés de transport combiné rail – route)<sup>27</sup> was created

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<sup>25</sup> See: <https://www.cen.eu>. CEN, *Who We Are*, <https://www.cen.eu/about/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed on 11 January 2017).

<sup>26</sup> See: <http://www.idit.asso.fr>. IDIT, *Activities*, <http://www.idit.asso.fr/sommaire.php?anglais=1> (accessed on 4 January 2017).

<sup>27</sup> See: <http://www.uirr.com>. UIRR, *Our Association*, <http://www.uirr.com/en/our-association.html> (accessed on 5 January 2017).

in 1970 and is the industry association for the sector of combined transport in Brussels. Its members are combined transport operators and combined transport terminals. It promotes combined transport, primarily to European decisionmakers, and facilitates the enhancement of the sector, while supporting the daily functioning of this ecologically and economically sustainable mode of longer distance freight transport.

The European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC, Comité européen de normalisation électrotechnique)<sup>28</sup> was designated as a European standards organization by the European Commission. CENELEC is a non-profit technical organization set up under Belgian law. It was created in 1973 as a result of the merger of two previous European organizations: CENELCOM and CENEL. CENELEC is responsible for standardization in the electrotechnical engineering field. It prepares voluntary standards, which help facilitate trade between countries, create new markets, cut compliance costs, and support the development of a European single market. In an ever more global economy, CENELEC fosters innovation and competitiveness, making technology available industry-wide through the establishment of voluntary standards.

With the creation of the single market in 1993, there arose an urgent need to focus on European transport matters. The Union of European Railway Industries (UNIFE, Union des industries ferroviaires européennes),<sup>29</sup> founded in 1975 in Paris (France), assumed the roles of the European Association of Railway Equipment Manufacturers (AFEDEF), the European Builders of Diesel Engine and Electric Locomotives (CELTE) and of the International Association of Rolling Stock Builders (AICMR), as the three associations were merged to form UNIFE in 1991. UNIFE moved its headquarters to Brussels in 1992. It directly represents European companies responsible for the design, manufacture, maintenance and refurbishment of rail transport systems, subsystems and related equipment. Membership is extended to associated members, which are primarily national railway industry associations from EU member states. The aim of UNIFE is to promote rail transport through dialogue with EU institutions and all important stakeholders.

Back in 1988, 14 railway companies felt the need to establish a stronger link with the European institutions in light of increasingly significant political developments in transport. As a result, CER<sup>30</sup> (Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies) was founded as an independent group of the International Union of Railways (UIC) with its own offices in Brussels. CER, representing the vast majority of EU rail businesses, has always been at the forefront in helping shape rail regulation. CER became an independent body in 1996, and its membership grew quickly to its

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<sup>28</sup> See: <https://www.cenelec.eu>. CENELEC, *Who We Are*, <https://www.cenelec.eu/aboutcenelec/who-we-are/index.html> (accessed on 9 December 2016).

<sup>29</sup> See: <http://www.unife.org>. UNIFE, *Introduction*, <http://www.unife.org/about-us/who-we-are.html> (accessed on 3 January 2017).

<sup>30</sup> See: <http://www.cer.be>. CER, *The Voice of European Railways*, <http://www.cer.be/about-us/who-we-are> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

current level of 74 railway undertakings, infrastructure companies and vehicle leasing companies.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)<sup>31</sup> was established in 1947 in Shanghai, China, originally as the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), to assist post-war economic reconstruction. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) moved its headquarters to Bangkok in January 1949. The name changed in 1974 to reflect both the economic and social aspects of development and the geographic location of its member countries. UNESCAP's mandate was broadened in 1977 by the General Assembly. The Committee on Transport addresses issues relating to the Asian Highway, the Trans-Asian Railway and other initiatives, and supports accession to and implementation of international transport agreements.

The Latin American Association of Railroads (ALAF, *Asociación Latinoamericana de Ferrocarriles*),<sup>32</sup> founded in 1964, is an organization recognized by the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO). It mostly consists of railway companies and the industrial sector in Latin America. Its headquarters is in Buenos Aires (Argentina). ALAF aims to promote safe, efficient and economic rail transport, promoting and strengthening the axes of Latin American integration, through exchange flows to absorb the increase in traffic. To achieve this objective, it promotes public transport policy to ensure the participation of rail transport in an equitable context. It stimulates trade by rail and promotes technical cooperation among countries in the region, ensuring coordination and progress, together with the Latin American railway industries underpinning the development of the regional economies of the member countries. Efforts to standardize the technical rules of rail transport have led to the standardization of products, with quality assurance, facilitating exchange between national and international rail networks.

The Union of African Railways (UAR)<sup>33</sup> was founded in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in 1972 as a specialized agency of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), currently the African Union (AU). The aims of UAR are to assess ways of unifying the African railways; to improve existing railway services; to connect existing railways; to normalize and standardize railway equipment; and to coordinate with other modes of transport.

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<sup>31</sup> See: <http://www.unescap.org>. UNESCAP, *About ESCAP*, <http://www.unescap.org/about> (accessed on 12 January 2016).

<sup>32</sup> See: <http://www.alaf.int.ar>. ALAF, *Association Information*, <http://masstransit.network/mass-transit-associations/the-latin-american-association-of-railroads-alaf> (accessed on 3 January 2017).

<sup>33</sup> A. David, *African Railway Information System*, Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1983.

## Harmonization and Development of International Organizations for Rail Transport after the Cold War

The Cold War divided Europe and affected the economic, institutional and political development of Eastern and Western Europe, each part of the continent heavily influenced by one of the two superpowers. After at least forty years, the collapse of the Eastern Bloc led to liberal democracy and the market economy, subject to institutional variations and different levels of social constraint. In order to adapt to changes in the political, economic, social, cultural and technological environment, the existing organizations have made steady progress and new organizations have emerged.

The Coordinating Council on Trans-Siberian Transportation (CCTT)<sup>34</sup> was established in 1993 in Moscow (Russia) by the Russian Ministry of Railway Transport. The aim of CCTT is to attract transit and foreign trade cargo to the Trans-Siberian Route (TSR); to coordinate the activities of the participants of international cargo transport on the TSR; to ensure high-quality delivery of goods and development of economic relations between the countries of Southeast Asia, the Far and Middle East, Central Asia and Europe, based on the Russian railway infrastructure. The Trans-Siberian corridor is the fastest negotiable route for freight transportation from East to West and West to East, which can and should become a catalyst of a growing goods exchange between the countries of Europe and Asia.<sup>35</sup>

Rail Net Europe (RNE)<sup>36</sup> was created in January 2004 at the initiative of many European railway Infrastructure Managers and Allocation Bodies (IMs/ABs), who wished to establish a common, Europe-wide organization to facilitate their international business. RNE is committed to facilitating international traffic on the European rail infrastructure. It provides support to Railway Undertakings (RUs) in their international activities (both for freight and passengers) and strives to increase the efficiency of the IMs' processes. As a trans-European association, RNE plays a pivotal role in encouraging the industry to follow harmonized, transparent, and non-discriminatory rules in the international railway business. The members of Rail Net Europe are making international rail transport conditions more uniform and introducing a corporate approach to promote the European railway business for the benefit of the entire rail industry across Europe.

The establishment of a single European railway area requires European Union involvement in the rules applicable to railways with regard to technical safety and interoperability, both requiring a higher level of harmonization at EU level. The goals of railway safety and interoperability require substantial technical work led

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<sup>34</sup> See: <http://en.icctt.com>. CCTT, *Who We Are*, <http://en.icctt.com/cctt> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

<sup>35</sup> CCTT, *The Trans-Siberian Mainline*, [http://en.icctt.com/transsib\\_mainline](http://en.icctt.com/transsib_mainline) (accessed on 16 June 2016).

<sup>36</sup> See: <http://www.rne.eu/>.

by a specialized body. That is why it was necessary, as part of the Second Railway Package in 2004, to create within the existing institutional framework, and respecting the balance of power in the European Union, a European agency dealing with railway safety and interoperability. The European Railway Agency (ERA)<sup>37</sup> was established in 2004 by Regulation (EC) 881/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004.

Following the entry into force of the technical pillar of the 4th EU Railway Package on 15 June 2016, the European Union Agency for Railways replaces and succeeds the European Railway Agency by Regulation (EU) 2016/796 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016. The Agency contributes, on technical matters, to the implementation of European Union legislation, aiming to improve the competitive position of the railway sector by enhancing the level of interoperability of rail systems, developing a common approach to safety on the European railway system and contributing to creating a single European railway area without frontiers, guaranteeing a high level of safety.<sup>38</sup> Since 2006, the ERA has worked to develop economically viable, common technical standards and safety measures and targets in cooperation with the rail sector, national authorities, EU institutions and other bodies. It has reported on rail safety in the EU and led efforts to create uniform signalling standards throughout Europe.<sup>39</sup> The European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) will become, from 2019 onwards, the European authority to issue single EU-wide safety certificates and vehicle authorizations for operation in more than one country.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

The motivations that influenced the establishment of international railway organizations included the standardization of technical factors in order to ease border crossing and the development of uniform rules and regulations for international rail transport.

Since its first treaty in 1893, the International Organizations for Rail Transport has continued to develop both quantitatively and qualitatively. Before the First World War, six international organizations (VDEV, Bern Convention, UT, IRCA, UITP and CIT) were established for rail transport. During the period between the First World War and the Second World War, UIC was established to promote international transportation

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<sup>37</sup> See: <http://www.era.europa.eu/Pages/Home.aspx>.

<sup>38</sup> European Union Agency for Railways, *Core Activities*, [http://www.era.europa.eu/Core-Activitie s/Pages/home.aspx](http://www.era.europa.eu/Core-Activitie%20s/Pages/home.aspx) (accessed on 10 June 2017).

<sup>39</sup> European Union, *European Union Agency for Railways (ERA)*, [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/era\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/era_en) (accessed on 16 June 2016).

<sup>40</sup> European Union Agency for Railways, *About Us*, <http://www.era.europa.eu/The-Agency/About-us/Pages/Home.aspx> (accessed on 4 May 2016).

by rail. After the Second World War, 13 international organizations were established. Another three were founded after the Cold War.

During the Cold War, competition between the US and the Soviet Union led to the establishment of a new international organization (OSJD) and the development of existing international organizations (OTIF, UIC). However, most international railway organizations have been established for the purpose of developing international rail traffic. For international transport, the basic framework of international agreement on technical standards and legislation regulating the obligation of each railway are required for smooth operations. This kind of work is beyond the scope of any single government or state.

Because of the concerns and interests of many stakeholders such as states, ministries, companies and international organizations, international rail transport is a very complicated process. In the future, the roles and functions of the International Organizations for Rail Transport are expected to become even larger and more important. Considering the globalised international transport environment, new organizations will be created to reflect the changing environment, and existing organizations will transform to add new roles and functions to themselves.