Spanish and European rail stakeholders debate about the future of rail R&I in Madrid

February 28, 2019

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**The Spanish Railway Technological Platform and Shift2Rail JU (S2R JU) organised a debate on the future of rail Research & Innovation, with representatives from rail operators, network managers, manufacturers, and research centres. The event took place on 12 February at the headquarters of the Spanish Foundation of Railways in Madrid.**

Spanish Director General for Research & Innovation Teresa Riesgo opened the day highlighting the excellent results achieved by Spanish entities within S2R and showed public support to the S2R if its good results continue and improve. Ms Riesgo also stressed the need to bring innovation closer to the market, where S2R is an important asset.

At the opening round table, Mr Pedro Lekuona, Director at the National Rail Safety Agency, agreed on the benefits Shift2Rail is bringing to the rail eco-system but stressed the need for Shift2Rail to make sure it keeps the high level of its results. Mr Lekuona also highlighted the need to include R&I strategies in trials and simulations in the future of European rail R&I programmes.

**European and Spanish perspectives on rail R&I**

The event was an ideal platform for European and Spanish railway entities to exchange views on R&I strategies and brainstorm on the future of European R&I funding.

European and international trade and research rail associations agreed on their view for railway to become the backbone of mobility in Europe by 2050, for which organisations demanded European funds for rail R&I to be raised.

European stakeholders highlighted collaboration across the rail sector and quicker standardisation processes for adoption of new technology as some of the most important achievements of Shift2Rail in its three years of activity.

On the other hand, Spanish operators RENFE, Metro de Madrid and TMB (operator of urban transport of Barcelona) and national network manager ADIF presented their current actions for innovating the rail sector. Examples of their work included further use of big data, design of improved future stations and development of the ‘digital train’.

To improve further collaboration across the continent, the four Spanish companies called for increasing further the dialogue between European and Spanish parties.

Spanish participants to the Shift2Rail programme presented then their participation in areas such as composite materials for lighter trains, multi-modal booking systems, and new techniques for smart maintenance powered by big data.

Shift2Rail Executive Director Carlo Borghini closed the event, stressing the need for pan-European collaboration to shape the future of Shift2Rail and rail innovation at large, where the final user should be at the centre and faster innovation market uptake would be a key objective.