A Rail Short Haul Operator (RSHO) gathers the diffuse shipments (lots, containers, mobile boxes) of diverse clients (shipper companies, ports, multimodal platforms) to establish multi-customers railroad convoys (full train). Every customer benefits from the productivity of this consolidation. A RSHO can also act as administrator of infrastructures for the French Railway Network (RFF). For example Ferovergne, the RSHO of Auvergne Region in France includes 16 shareholders: eight carriers logisticians who hold 64 % of the shares, big shippers (Volvic) hold 14 %, GEODIS a SNCF subsidiary 15 %, the managers of the SHO 6 %, and the Regional Chamber of Trade and Industry (CRCI) 1 %.

The main benefit of these operators is to boost and widen the rail freight market. For local shippers and carriers, RSHO also keep the choice between rail and road. Rail local infrastructure is kept in use. The environmental benefits are those of using the railways instead of road.

Three tools allow to support the launch of the RSHO in France: The financial support of the State for the realization of feasibility studies; A participation of RFF and the APITEF to the renovation of the small lines of freight; Local authorities (regions and departments) can also help. Besides, SNCF can contribute to the project with funds (equity participation), equipment or staff.

The financial risk is thus important, the profitability will depend directly on the handled volumes. The first difficulties which a RSHO has to face are the lack of financing, and the administrative difficulties for their creation, the obtaining of the necessary certifications, the high costs of training.

Competitive logistics and transport system; Highest safety and security; Increased efficiency / productivity of logistics processes; Increased company profitability; Increased competitiveness; Image; Increased safety and security; Reduced emissions;
The most solid SHO are the ones which benefit from a regular flow, for example from a port. The main objective is not to lose clients for the railways rather than to win new clients. The idea is that the practice has to be implemented when the main railways Company is changing its offer. There are different SHO in different regions of France. Concerning the transfer to other countries the legal system would have to be adapted.

According to the French Ministry of Transport (DGITM march 2014) a RSHO is “A local railroad SME which assures the transport of the freight of closeness and which can manage in complement the infrastructure by delegation. These RSHO constitute a new answer to the transport of short and average distances in ports and territories.

Acting as a transfer point between shippers of a region and the main rail-way line operators, a RSHO may operate rail and road transport, handling, loading and unloading, and maintain the railway infrastructure.

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