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IKEA leads the way on deregulated European railways

The furniture group Ikea is taking the lead in operating cross-border trains on deregulated railways. On Friday, the first agreement of its kind was signed by Ikea and three European rail administrations. In autumn, Ikea will begin operating its own freight trains through several countries in Europe.

“Trains are a way for us to ensure high transport capacity and cost-effectiveness, and to achieve the best possible environmental adaptation at the same time,” says Ikea Rail’s CEO, Christer Beijbom.

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The agreement between Ikea Rail AB, Banestyrelsen in Denmark, DB Netz AG in Germany and Banverket (the Swedish National Rail Administration) was signed at a ceremony in Helsingborg on Friday 29 June. The agreement gives Ikea’s newly-formed company Ikea Rail AB a licence as a train operator to use its own “slot” on the railways of the three countries.

European harmonisation

Already in autumn, Ikea will begin operating one train in each direction every weekday between the junction station at Duisburg in Germany and the central stores in Älmhult. Ikea will use the European system of “Freight Freeways” that have been created to improve the efficiency of cross-border rail transport and are part of the European deregulation of railways. Freight Freeways have existed for several years, but Ikea is first to use them in practice.

“Ikea will be the successful example that the industry needs in order to see that self-operated and fast trains across borders are a concrete possibility,” says Banverket’s Market Manager, Peder Wadman.

Major competitive advantages

Ikea, which is growing vigorously, expects to increase its transports substantially. The next stage will be “pipe-rail”, Ikea trains, to Poland, Italy and the Benelux countries. The vision is to build up a network of direct trains in Europe that meet at a junction station in Germany. Thanks to fewer stops, the Ikea trains will have a much higher average speed than current transnational freight transports, which will increase the competitiveness of railways. Ikea plans in the future to convey

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nearly half of its freight by rail.

“The pipe-rail system will be a backbone in Ikea’s logistics system in Europe. At the same time it will reinforce Ikea’s environmental profile,” says Ikea Rail’s CEO, Christer Beijbom.