Concept understood but details need clarification
Results from the 2nd Annual Freightwise Framework Survey

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During the Freightwise Conference on 2 December 2008 in Prague a quick feedback survey on the event's content was conducted.

The aim of the survey was to see whether the main aspects of the presentations were understood by the audience and at the same time to get feedback on their opinion on certain aspects.

Above: Survey form as used during the 2nd Freightwise Conference in Prague 2 December 2009

Quantitative evaluation of the survey

Commercial aspects:

A clear majority (86%) of the participants are of the opinion that the Freightwise Framework (FWF) can make it simpler for them to use intermodal transport. In summary the participants see the possibilities inherent in FWF but there is still a great deal of scepticism about it because many important details are still unclear.

More than half of the participants (61%) think that the advantages in advertising their services on the internet using FWF outweigh the disadvantages of their co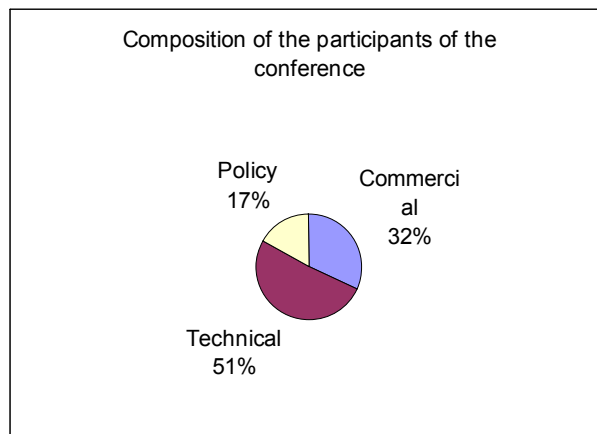mpetitors being able to see the services they are offering. But 26% disagreed and 13% of participants did not give an answer which could be interpreted that they are undecided.

Although the agreement vs. disagreement ratio is not 50:50, it can be said that there is a strong opposition to this statement. It probably depends on the side you are on: If you are a shipper you are in favour of this feature

of the FWF, if you are a transport service provider you are not in favour of this feature. It is probably the hardest point of the FWF when it comes to market proliferation that the transport companies are not in favour of market transparency. So the shippers would have to lead the demand.

Two thirds of the participants think that comparing the FWF with the currently available commercial systems, FWF offers more/better functionality. So there is substantial support for the FWF, but there are as well a third of sceptics who apparently want to see more proof of these advantages.

Technical aspects:

Almost three quarters of the respondents see advantages for the transport service providers in defining their services in the format suggested by the FWF and only a quarter of the respondents disagree or did not answer.

More than two thirds of the respondents say they have understood the automated mechanism of FWF that will be used to implement the iterative process. This can be counted as a great success for the Freightwise Conference in making the FWF intelligible to its audience, but it leaves still a considerable minority of 25% who have not understood. This means there is still some work to be done in explaining how the FWF will work because there is uncertainty about the human aspect and trust in negotiating deals and the standards and specifications are not yet regarded as clear enough.

Again three-quarters of the respondents got a positive picture of the FWF. They can envisage what kind of IT architecture will be used to manage the information exchanged along the transport chain. A small fraction of 18% does not have this opinion and another 7% did not answer. But agreement or disagreement depends on the level of abstraction. On a high level of abstraction people agree but when it comes to the details of the architecture they do not fully agree because there is still a lack of clarity.

Political aspects:

An overwhelming 82% agree or mostly agree that they understand how the FWF enables transport policy implementation. Only a quite small group of 9% mostly disagree with this statement, no one completely disagrees, but there were 8% who did not give an answer.

There seems to be almost unanimity among the respondents that an open FWF standard will facilitate interoperability within intermodal chains: 94% agree or mostly agree with this statement. Only 3% disagree with this statement and apparently (rightly) want to see proof of practice. Another 3% did not answer this statement.

Whereas on the question of whether the EU Commission should take the initiative to develop the FWF into a standard and the industry will follow, there are only two thirds who agree or at least mostly agree with that opinion. A considerable third of the respondents disagreed or did not give an answer.

The support largely depends on how the process of defining the standard is constructed: the large stakeholders of the industry have to be on board because it has to fit the industries' requirements, so force would not lead to the desired result. So "lead" could be understood as "taking the initiative" and leading the process.

A second issue is the way the defined standard is implemented. Here it seems that it should be left to the market and not made mandatory because enforcement by law is regarded as not working.

So generally speaking it can be said that "Standard YES" but" Enforcement by Law NO"

To sum up the results of the survey it can be said that the concept of the Freightwise Framework is now understood by the community but that there are still a lot of open details to be clarified. As the project has still another year to go it is only natural that not yet every detail is closely defined. So let's get to work to answer the open questions.

For more information on this survey please contact Jan Prahm on: prahm@tutech.de