



News Release

Rail Forum Europe calls for realistic measures to reduce rail noise

Brussels, 31 May – *“Wagon noise: on the way to remove the last rail environmental burden”* was the title of a Rail Forum Europe dinner held on 29 May in the European Parliament in Brussels, sponsored by CER (the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies), ERFA (European Rail Freight Association), UIP (International Union of Wagon Keepers) and UNIFE (Association of the European Rail Industry). Members of Rail Forum Europe and railway stakeholders called for adequate measures to abate rail noise, especially from freight wagons, minimising the impact on the competitiveness of the sector. The issue is of great importance, especially in certain densely populated areas, and therefore both the railway community and the European Commission are looking into viable solutions.

Johannes Gräber, Director Technology and Production, DB Systemtechnik GmbH, presented a UIC-led project called Europetrain to reduce rail noise based on the principle of “smooth wheels on smooth rails”. With the use of composite brake blocks in combination with smooth rails, noise is reduced by approximately 10 decibels, which means a halving of the perceived noise. The study is supported by 27 Railway and 8 Industry Partners from all over Europe.

“Reducing noise at the source by retrofitting freight rolling stock with low noise braking technology is the most cost effective option, especially compared to building noise barriers, since it avoids high investments and maintenance cost for infrastructure managers” he concluded.

Markus Vaerst, Director Engineering & Regulatory of AAE, expressed the cost concerns of wagon keepers and railway undertakings about retrofitting existing wagons with “LL blocks”. In particular, they result in a higher rental cost compared to cast iron blocks because of higher operational and maintenance cost for the wheel sets.

“We are ready to retrofit our wagons, but we need appropriate cost funding, homogenous noise differentiated track access charges throughout the EU and a non-discriminatory approach within the rail sector and with other transport modes” he said

Sian Prout, Head of Unit for Single European Rail Area, DG MOVE, provided an overview on the different initiatives being carried out by the Commission on the noise issue. She said that DG MOVE is about to launch a study on the “effective reduction of noise generated by railway freight wagons in use in the European Union”.

“The Commission is keen to avoid disruptions in the process of completing the Single European Railway Area by ensuring a common EU approach in tackling rail noise” she said.

CER Executive Director Libor Lochman highlighted that noise issues should be resolved without compromising the competitiveness of rail vis à vis other

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modes. *“We need to do more on noise, not only in rail but also in other modes of transport, for instance through full internalisation of external costs”* he stated.

UNIFE General Manager Massimo Marianeschi pointed out that noise is an issue both in the short and long run. *“A harmonised and interoperable approach to retrofitting is the short-term solution. In the long run, rail research will provide the right solutions. In this respect, the SHIFT²RAIL initiative being carried out by the rail sector contains a number of measures to tackle the noise issue”* he said.

Denis Biasin (Head of interoperability unit, European Railway Agency) detailed how the Noise TSI simplifies the authorisation for placing wagons into service, thus minimising the impact on rail competitiveness.

Brian Simpson, Chairman of the EP’s Transport Committee and President of Rail Forum Europe concluded the debate by thanking rail stakeholders for their constructive approach on such a technical and controversial issue.

Rail Forum Europe will hold its next breakfast event on 9 July 2013 in Brussels. On this occasion, the MEPs will address the issue of rail relationships with third countries, with focus on the EU Free Trade Agreements with Japan and US.

About Rail Forum Europe

Founded by Members of the European Parliament from across the parliamentary committees, Rail Forum Europe is an international non-profit making association that aims at bringing together EU decision-makers and the rail sector to achieve a better understanding of rail-related issues.

Rail Forum Europe is governed solely by a Managing Board of MEPs, the President of which is Mr Brian Simpson (Chairman of the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism).

For more information on Rail Forum Europe, please contact info@rail-forum.eu or visit www.rail-forum.eu.

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