

PRESS RELEASE



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ERFA Annual event 2016: ERFA leads the charge for the rail sector to up its game and deliver higher performance

At ERFA's annual event the **EU Commission's Head of Transport Henrik Hololei** led calls for the rail sector to raise its game. Highlighting ERFA's ambitious, new action plan to deliver high performance on the rail freight corridors, Mr Hololei welcomed this fresh momentum to tackle rail's current underperformance. Making a plea for the sector and Member States to move away from creating barriers to a more competitive sector, Mr Hololei expressed his regret for the lowering of the original ambition in 4th Railway Package political pillar. Nevertheless he underlined that this is an important step forward towards the Single European Rail Area.

The readiness and the momentum of independent rail operators to drive forward dynamic change in the rail sector was highlighted by **ERFA President Irmtraut Tonndorf**. ERFA will tackle the cost and quality issues facing the rail sector as a priority. The achievement of "quick wins", relatively small investments in quality that can result in big improvements on the performance of rail, must be at the centre of any action plan to improve performance of the rail corridors. ERFA will also focus on close collaboration with enforcement and competition authorities to push forward greater market-orientation in the sector. In particular Ms Tonndorf highlighted current EU rules requiring infrastructure providers to reduce costs and user charges, which need urgent enforcement.

In the debate held on the occasion of the ERFA event the moderator **Wim van de Camp MEP** urged the sector to be proactive in finding solutions. Not all the challenges faced by the rail sector would be solved by the 4th Railway Package and new, innovative ideas would be needed from within the sector. EU policy makers should support this. **Matthew Walsh, Executive Vice-President of Genesee and Wyoming** highlighted how greater stability, coordination and consistency between and within the various regulatory regimes of the European rail market would allow for the same productivity enhancements, investment and freight rail volume growth experienced in North America and Australia. **Samskip CEO Jens Holger Nielsen** urged political action to support the more sustainable rail sector vis-à-vis the road sector and highlighted the concern that rail monopolies are still a major issue stifling competition, making rail less attractive to customers. **Barbora Mickova** from the new entrant Leo Express echoed this view, highlighting the many benefits of customer choice for boosting rail growth, but the many limitations that existed for new companies to invest in rail and offer their services. Closing the debate **Hellen van Dongen from the Dutch Transport Ministry** highlighted the Dutch Presidency's initiative for a strong commitment from the EU Member States to deliver high performance of the corridors. The challenge is on the rail sector to respond and grasp the opportunities.

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Lowering user charges and incentivising higher performance for rail were the two main themes discussed during the earlier ERFA seminar held together with rail regulators and the European Commission. New EU rules provide greater transparency, cost-efficiency and consistency in the charges rail has to pay, but in some Member States there is poor enforcement. Regulators have the powers to intervene and should use them. There is also scope for improvement on the charges levied for rail facilities, an issue ERFA will tackle in the RU subgroup it is chairing, open to all railway operators across Europe.

Three new members were elected to the ERFA Board for 2016. **Lindsay Durham** from **Freightliner Group**, **Mats Nyblom** from **Hector Rail** and **Dirk Stahl** from **BLS Cargo** join the ERFA Board team.

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ERFA - European Rail Freight Association - represents new entrants, i.e. all those operators who want open access and fair market conditions, and sustains their role of pushing forward the development of the railway market. The Association is very much a spin-off of the First Railway Package, adopted by the EU in 2001, and its vision of creating an open and competitive European rail market.

In 2016, ERFA represents 33 members from 16 countries. The members of ERFA all share a commitment to work towards a competitive and innovative single European railway market by promoting attractive, fair and transparent market conditions for all railway companies.

The members of ERFA represent the entire value chain of rail transportation: rail freight operators, wagon keepers, service providers, forwarders, passenger operators and national rail freight associations.