

PRESS RELEASE

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ERFA welcomes French Government's sustainable investment initiative into rail freight

ERFA strongly welcomes the European Commission's approval of 60 M€ French state aid for the establishment, renewal and extension of rail freight sidings.

This is a welcome development in the French Government's, and in particular the Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne's support for the eco-friendly rail freight sector.

ERFA believes that if rail freight is to develop and grow it requires national governments to actively support sustainable investment in rail freight and to increase rail's competitiveness vis-à-vis the road sector.

Similar grants already exist in Switzerland and Germany, where the EU modal shift objectives are supported by ambitious Government support policies.

The French rail sidings market is in a particularly difficult situation, as around 50% of the 2500 -3000 rail sidings are out of service. Many industries are facing aging sidings which may lead to closure due to prohibitive maintenance or renewal costs, hampering rail freight operations in the future.

ERFA hopes that this initiative is part of a long term modal shift policy where rail freight no longer takes second place to passenger transport. It is clear that the investment initiative must also be accompanied by improved flexibility in the offer and management of paths, by getting the constantly increasing path costs under control and by a better quality of rail freight paths. ERFA will also continue to fight against the capillary network closure which represents 20 % of the French rail freight volume.

ERFA will remain attentive to ensure that the public subsidy for rail freight is allocated on a neutral and transparent basis, thereby supporting a competitive rail sector in France. It is also essential that the refurbished sidings are available for access by all operators on a transparent and non-discriminatory basis, in line with the new EU rules designed to strengthen the role of the rail facilities market in supporting rail's growth.

Link to the EU Commission DG COMP decision:

http://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/case_details.cfm?proc_code=3_SA_48483

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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 2018, ERFA represents 30 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.