

Press Release – ERFA supports French Proposal to Waive Track Access Charges

24 August 2020

ERFA welcomes the announced by Prime Minister of France, Mr. Jean Castex, that France will waive track access charges until the end of 2020 and reduce charges by half for the entirety of 2021. ERFA believes this initiative will support all rail freight undertakings in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. ERFA calls for other national governments to follow the example of France to assist the rail freight industry.

The proposal of France builds upon the European Commission’s proposal for a Regulation for a sustainable rail market in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. This Regulation gives Member States the necessary flexibility to waive and reduce track access charges. ERFA is strongly supporting the adoption of this Regulation by the European Parliament and Council. ERFA believes the announcement by Mr. Castex also displays that Member States have a serious interest in taking advantage of the freedoms granted under the Commission proposal.

Importantly, as already communicated, ERFA believes the proposal being put forward is the best way to support the rail freight industry in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. All operators, regardless of size, are experiencing difficulties related to the COVID-19 pandemic and it is therefore important that potential aid measures respect the competitive nature of the rail freight market. Importantly, the proposal also sets aside funding so as to ensure that the infrastructure manager continues to be properly financed and that important infrastructure works can continue undisturbed.

ERFA President, Dirk Stahl, commented, *“the announcement by Prime Minister Castex is an extremely positive development for all rail freight operators active in France. We strongly believe that it sends a strong signal to European policy makers that the proposal of the European Commission is fair and appropriate. We encourage all national governments to implement similar measures to assist rail freight undertakings”.*

ERFA Secretary General, Conor Feighan said *“in order to send a clear message to national governments, it is crucial that the European Parliament and Council adopt the European Commission’s proposal for a Regulation for a sustainable rail market in view of the COVID-19 Pandemic as fast as possible. This will provide national governments with the necessary legal clarity in which to act to support rail freight”.*

For more information, you can Contact:

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