

ERFA welcomes Wim van de Camp's stock-taking exercise on progress towards a more sustainable transport system

In the 2011 Transport White Paper ambitious growth targets were set for the European rail sector.

By 2030 rail is expected to play a major role in Europe's sustainability agenda. Even more so by 2050.

ERFA fully supports the growth targets, but wants to see more concrete actions taken by the European Commission and EU Member States in order to achieve them.

Obstacles that urgently need tackling:

- Failure by successive Member State Governments to prioritise rail investment and to correctly implement EU legislation
- Failure of the rail sector to attract customers and growth via quality services
- Failure of rail to offer a competitive alternative to the other modes of transport, most notably aviation and road.

How to reach the growth targets for rail?

More of the same will not work. Status quo is not an option.

1) With limited expectations that public funding for rail will increase to the extent needed, ERFA supports open markets that can promote sustainability and be an opportunity for customers, employees and society:

Full transparency in the use of existing public funds for the rail sector

Efficient and effective use of existing public money for investment in the infrastructure and in public service obligations (where commercial services are not viable). This means an end to cross-subsidisation and misusing public money for other purposes.

Transparency and public accountability in the management of the rail infrastructure

The rail infrastructure is a natural monopoly, and should be held to account via key performance indicators and transparency in the way it manages public money to the benefit of society and the environment. Independence in the management of the infrastructure and strong regulatory oversight are needed in this regard.

Quality of the service for customers should be at the heart of the rail system

Several operators on the network providing choice to the customer, be they public or privately-run operators. A level playing field for all operators is necessary, where new entrants can provide new services and better quality in a competitive environment.

With this in mind ERFA supports the amendments in favour of greater independence of the infrastructure management and ensuring equal access to the infrastructure (Amendments

88 and 518) and amendments in favour of an adoption of the full 4th Railway Package, both the political and technical pillar (Amendments 89, 531, & 517)

2) Market opening in the rail sector, and in the transport modes more widely, should go hand in hand with the respect of rules regarding social and working conditions.

Attracting new generations to jobs in the rail sector, providing training in new skills and career development for quality jobs, contribute to the competitiveness of EU rail companies and to a future growth-orientated rail sector.

ERFA supports open markets that create opportunities for employees and that do not lead to social dumping or a race to the bottom, undermining the competitiveness of EU companies and the different transport modes.

**With this in mind ERFA supports in particular Amendments 343, 334, 327, 344
ERFA also supports Amendment 332 on boosting womens' role in the transport sector and bringing down the disparity between women and men.**

3) A competitive rail sector within a level playing field for all modes of transport promotes sustainability and efficient modal choice.

Accelerated reform and greater market-orientation in the rail sector must be accompanied by charges across the transport modes that also reflect the polluter pays principle. Internalisation of the external costs of transport can help users find transport alternatives that are best for the environment and the economy.

ERFA fully supports the goal to shift more freight and passengers onto the more sustainable modes (Amendment 110) and the introduction of a European framework for distance-based charging (Amendment 135) including the complete internalisation of external costs (Amendment 139).

ERFA also supports the adoption by the European Commission of a 2030 rail strategy (Amendment 543), proposing new measures to reach the modal shift target, but believes this should not be a substitute for Member States adopting/implementing already existing legislation and taking concrete action.

4) The rail sector must continue to play a central role in the sustainability of the transport system. This also means addressing environmental concerns, such as noise pollution for people living close to railway lines

Only by responding to the needs of its customers and society at large, can the rail sector play a thriving and growing role in the transportation of goods and people.

However ERFA stresses the need for workable solutions that do not jeopardise the competitiveness of the rail sector, that do not lead to distortions within the rail market and that ultimately do not result in a modal shift back to road.

Any increase to the cost of rail transport will have an impact on the rail sector's ability to compete with the road sector and its already cheaper services. If the will is really there to relieve the congestion and pollution caused to society by lorries transporting goods, efforts must be made at all levels to support the rail sector in remaining an attractive and cost-effective choice for customers and shippers.

In view of the fact that we have to deal with two noise sources, both the wheel and the rail, ERFA considers that targeted public funding to reduce rail noise, i.e. sufficiently supporting the retrofitting of existing wagons (Amendment 554) combined with improving rail infrastructure (part of Amendment 553) is the right way forward.

ERFA does not believe that outright bans on noisy freight wagons by 2020 is the right answer and therefore strongly opposes part of Amendment 553 calling for a ban. ERFA supports an EU approach to addressing the noise issue and defining a ban date but strongly opposes an EU-wide ban of noisy wagons by 2020.

The success of any noise reduction measure depends on the willingness of Europe and the Member States to compensate not only the costs of retrofitting but also the higher life cycle costs arising from the use of composite (K or LL) brake blocks.

In this sense and if we want to see a reduction of noise emissions in rail, without jeopardising further rail freight competitiveness and efficient cross border traffic, ERFA calls on the European Parliament to carefully consider the impact assessment carried out by the European Commission on this subject and to respect the dates currently under discussions for an EU-wide ban by 2030.