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PRESS RELEASE

A NEW SNCB/NMBS structure in line with the European objectives

Paul Magnette, the Belgian Minister of public bodies, has today announced the new structure for the Belgian railways.

ERFA warmly welcomes this new structure decided by the Belgian Government: the Infrastructure Manager, Infrabel and the historic operator, SNCB, will be totally separated without a holding company as is the case at present.

The new structure is in line with the first railway package and the future fourth railway package. It guarantees open access to all operators without discrimination, avoiding any conflict of interests. The simplification of the structure will also generate dramatic cost savings.

ERFA congratulates Minister Magnette for his consistent and courageous approach, which will contribute to the efficiency of the Belgian rail system. In the coming days, the Belgian parliament will have to vote to validate this proposal.

ERFA hopes that Belgium's new separated model will inspire neighbouring countries which are currently reflecting on the future of rail organisation.

Contacts:

ERFA (European Rail Freight Association) was set up with the 1st Railway Package in Brussels in July 2002 to represent the interests of the new independent and private 'open access' rail freight operators. ERFA is EU Representative Body. Today, the association comprises 30 members (21 rail freight operators, wagon keepers, service providers, forwarders as well as 9 national rail freight associations) from 16 countries in wider Europe. ERFA represents more than 800 locomotives and 55.000 freight wagons. ERFA's main objective is to make the rail freight market fit for competition so that rail freight can expand its market share, attract new investments, become more innovative and create jobs. By doing so, ERFA contributes to a highly competitive EU rail freight market.

ERFA's key mission to achieve its objective is to remove all legal, technical, social and administrative barriers that prevent its members from rapidly establishing international cross-border freight services, using all rail infrastructures regardless of who manages them, and to encourage any developments likely to enable all rail companies to flourish on this market, regardless of their size or age.

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