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PRESS RELEASE

To the European Council of Transport

For a safe railway system in Europe, we need urgently an empowered ERA!

Under the 4th railway package and the revision of the safety directive, the issuance of the unique safety certificate by the European Railway Agency (ERA) for railway undertakings is contested by several Member States. This could constitute a blocking minority! The work carried out in the European Council of Ministers of Transport on governance of railway safety is at risk!

Why is ERFA concerned?

- The establishment of the single European railway market is taking far too much time. Rails customers cannot benefit of the advantages of free competition in terms of price and quality as on road.
- The members of ERFA (pioneers of independent cross-border traffic) continue to suffer from the non-harmonisation of safety and technical rules and the barriers related therewith.
- The 4th package proposed by the Commission must be approved as a whole and not be split – because everything is interlinked, technical pillar and governance of the infrastructure – so as to constitute the final step in the construction of a new, liberalised European railway system.
- Rail safety is crucial and must be organised and supervised flawlessly by the ERA in cooperation with the national safety authorities.
- ERA must be upgraded as “ The European Rail System Authority” to improve the safety of the European network because of :
 - Harmonisation and simplification of the European and national rules
 - Development of a unified European safety standard
 - Development of a European safety competence centre
 - The indispensable drastic reduction of incompatible national technical rules
 - The issuance of authorisations for vehicles and certificates of safety for railway undertakings under its sole responsibility, taking into account - and with the cooperation of the National Safety Authorities (NSAs) - the national specific features



It would therefore be unacceptable and irresponsible to keep the ERA out of these missions and keep them confined to a network of NSAs, thereby reinforcing nationalistic tendencies to the detriment of a united and harmonised European railway system!

ERFA fortunately learnt to its great satisfaction of the Rapporteur's proposals on the safety directive of the European Parliament from MEP Michael Cramer who pleaded also for the indispensable leadership of the ERA and its mission of sole responsible body for these matters.

ERFA therefore calls insistently on all the Member States to build, together with all the stakeholders in the field, the new, simplified and just as safe European railway system to achieve the objectives of the transport white paper.

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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