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PRESS RELEASE

4th Railway Package - Parliament allows the long-awaited railway reform to deliver concrete results ... but NOT ALL!

26th February is the day of the First Reading of the European Parliament on the Fourth Railway Package.

26th February was also the day of publication of the First Railway Package in the EU Official Journal. But that was back in 2001! This First Package was meant to include the basic elements for a **full opening of the rail freight market**. **Thirteen years later, we are still far from it** because major barriers to market development remain in place. However, the European Parliament has just sent a clear signal that things should finally change for the better.

The first barriers are of technical nature. With the unambiguous support for the technical pillar of the Fourth Railway Package, **the Parliament allows for simplified, cheaper and ever safer processes** for vehicle authorization. The way is also paved for the empowerment of the European Railway Agency – but with a too late put in operation - to issue European safety certificates for railway undertakings in cooperation with National Safety Authorities.

The second type of barriers is of political nature. ERFA has repeatedly demonstrated that the independence of the infrastructure manager (IM) is a *sine qua non* condition for further market developments. The foreseen strong Chinese Walls between the IM and railway undertakings were good protection measures to avoid discrimination and conflict of interest. What is at stake is not only the organization chart of the infrastructure manager. It is also ALL its functions (traffic control, maintenance, investments and renewals in addition to path allocation and charging); In other words, its actual ability to fulfill its role. **Unfortunately, the Members of the European Parliament did not decide for a full independence of the IM and preferred to limit its decision-power. Once more, ERFA will be obliged to strict vigilance on the discrimination's risks.**



ERFA has also been at the forefront of the setting up of the **Coordination Committees** which will allow for a regular and open dialogue between the IM and all its clients. The performance of the network manager will be controlled in a transparent way, discussed and eventually enhanced. **The European Network of Infrastructure Managers (ENIM)** was also adopted which is good news for the core network.

From a social point of view, Unions representatives must understand that the railway reform will bring benefits to the workforce. It will level-up salaries and working conditions in the sector.

François Coart, Chairman of ERFA: ***“This vote is a major step forward in the construction of a real European rail network. The reinforce interoperability will benefit to passengers as freight customers in terms of safety, pricing and reliability. I strongly regret that lobbies exceeding by far the usual democratic game led a majority of MEP’s to not choose for the compromise which was produced by the TRAN committee in terms of separation between Infrastructure Manager and historic operators. ERFA will continue to defend its members to guarantee fair competition and equal treatment.”***

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 18 countries in wider Europe. ERFA represents more than 70 Railways Undertakings. 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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