

Press Release – Collective responsibility to relaunch rail freight highlighted by key stakeholders at ERFA Event

07 May 2026

Cross-Border cooperation, capacity improvement, level playing field between road toll and rail TACs and customer-focus were the key enablers to relaunch rail freight services recommended at the ERFA Annual Event on 6 May in Brussels.

Against a backdrop of mounting economic and operational pressures on the rail freight sector, ERFA brought together more than 120 participants and keynote speakers representing European institutions, national government and authorities, railway undertakings, customers and sector representatives.



“The rail freight sector is under huge and increasing pressure to deliver.” These were the opening remarks of ERFA President, Dirk Stahl, who named few of the biggest threats related to geopolitical instability, weakening industrial demand, infrastructure constraints, and unstable regulatory and commercial conditions, all of which hinder the rail’s ability to meet customer expectations and risking a shift back to road transport. To secure its future and relaunch rail freight, he appealed for urgent and coordinated action.

Despite this negative climate, rail freight remains a key contributor to tackle road congestion, reduce Europe’s fossil fuel dependencies, meet decarbonisation goals, support the well-functioning of key supply chains, and facilitate military mobility. The market-driven rail freight industry, where [challengers’ position is expanding](#), is willing to contribute even more.

Recognising that rail freight performance depends on the alignment of all actors, five keynote speakers representing key players of the rail ecosystem were invited to share their insights and perspectives:

- Kristian Schmidt (Director – Land, DG MOVE, European Commission)
- Christa Hostettler (Director of Federal Office of Transport, Switzerland)
- Godfried Smit (Secretary General of the European Shippers Council).

For more information, you can contact:

European Rail Freight Association asbl, website: www.erfarail.eu, email: info@erfarail.eu, Tel +41 76 264 14 47
Rue Montoyer 39, B-1000 Brussels ; Reg nr. 0478.440.721. Belgian official gazette 26.11.2007

- Piotr Malepszak (Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Infrastructure, Poland)
- Henrik Würdemann (CEO of Captrain Deutschland, President of Die Güterbahnen)

Running under the **#relauchrailfreight**, a common message emerged throughout the discussions: rail freight can deliver, but only with the support of political commitment and the right conditions in place, such as:

- Targeted investments in infrastructure maintenance and capacity management to improve reliability and punctuality and secure infrastructure capacities at least by 80% in periods of construction works;
- Better coordination between neighbouring countries and along international freight corridors;
- Connectivity between ports and rail network;
- Greater harmonisation of operational and technical rules at EU level;
- Fair and predictable track access conditions;
- Establishment of a level playing field between Trach Access Charge for rail and toll-charges for road transport.

Customers are ready to integrate rail freight more strongly into their supply chains if services become more reliable, predictable and better integrated into logistics networks.

The discussions confirmed a shared responsibility across the entire rail freight ecosystem to work together, align priorities across borders, build trust among stakeholders and translate political ambition into concrete operational improvements.

ERFA will continue working closely with European institutions, Member States and sector partners to turn these shared objectives into tangible actions at EU level and help create the conditions for a strong and competitive European rail freight sector.



Pictures: © Cédric Puisney



About ERFA

The European Rail Freight Association represents private and independent rail freight companies and advocates for fair competition and non-discriminatory market access within the European rail sector.

For more information, you can contact:

European Rail Freight Association asbl, website: www.erfarail.eu, email: info@erfarail.eu, Tel +41 76 264 14 47
Rue Montoyer 39, B-1000 Brussels ; Reg nr. 0478.440.721. Belgian official gazette 26.11.2007