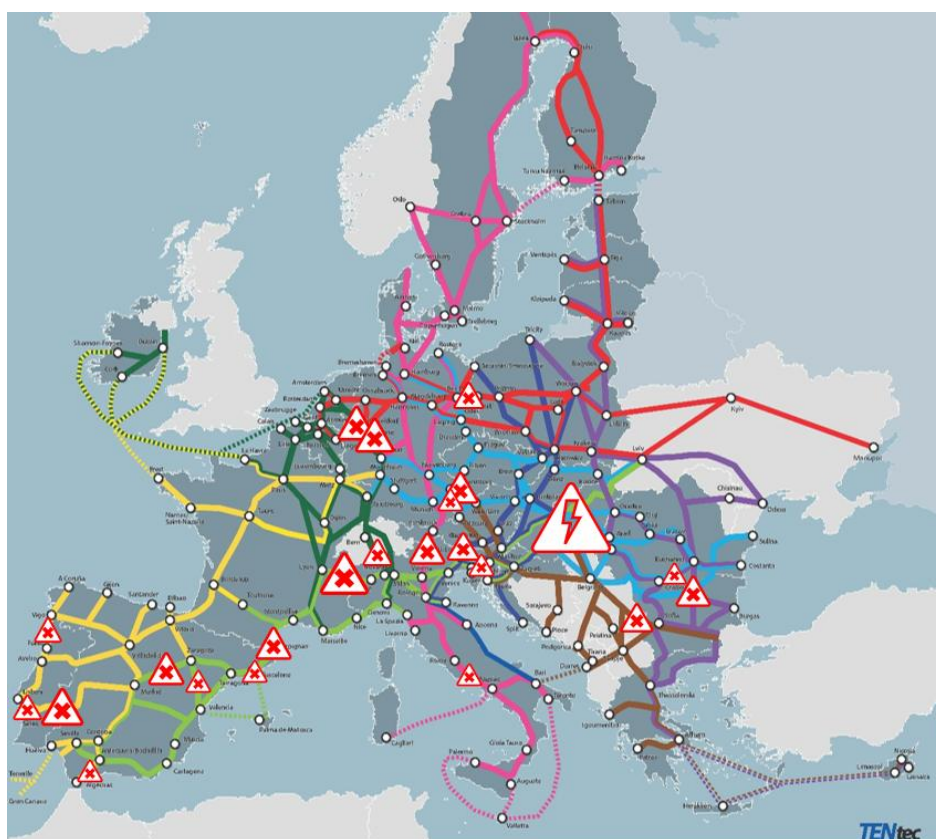


ERFA Statement on closure of lines

21 August 2026

Across Europe, railway undertakings and operators are facing severe capacity restrictions to infrastructure due to growing combination of last-minute changes to closure of lines, lack or low quality of alternative routes, simultaneous works and poor cross-border coordination. The result is an interrupted rail network that is becoming increasingly difficult to operate reliably and increasingly difficult for customers to trust. This is no longer an operational problem for railway undertakings. It is a threat to European supply chains, industrial competitiveness, the Single Market and Europe's ambition to shift freight from road to rail. Europe needs to act now!

ERFA proposes **four Actions** which will determine whether customers will be using rail tomorrow!



(TENtec edited by ERFA)

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There is an urgent need to consider the users of the network, especially at this time of the year, where closures and restrictions are even more numerous (see non-exhaustive list of recent closures in **ANNEX** below and represented with red signs on the **MAP** of the TEN-T network above).

Freight railway undertakings fully recognise that works along the rail infrastructure to maintain the performance of the network, upgrade equipment and structure, or electrify lines are indispensable, especially after several decades of underinvestment. However, the way the works are planned and delivered is becoming unsustainable. Europe needs infrastructure investments that do not destroy the services they are supposed to strengthen.

The rail freight sector is under pressure to deliver more reliable, punctual and client-friendly services in a highly competitive environment with other modes. Instead, it is now fighting for its very survival as many RUs are experiencing difficult operational and financial situation, with some risking to become bankrupt. There is a limit to how much disruption and losses the sector can absorb. That limit has been reached.

⇒ **Click on the titles below to access the content:**

- **TEN-T map with overview of recent closures and disruptions**

- **The consequences are already visible**

- 1) Operational constraints and reduced train capacity
- 2) Additional locomotives, drivers and operational resources for RUs
- 3) Congestion and loss of network capacity
- 4) Poor corridor-level coordination
- 5) Border delays and uncertainty for staff and customers
- 6) Consequences for supply chains and customers
- 7) Risk of permanent modal shift from rail to road

- **FOUR actions for Europe that need to be implemented urgently**

- Action 1 – Plan infrastructure works around the needs of the network's customers
- Action 2 – Coordinate closures across borders
- Action 3 – Compensate Railway Undertakings and rail freight operators
- Action 4 - Do not wait until 2031!

- **ANNEX – List of lines affected by capacity restrictions recently and in the near future**

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The consequences are already visible

1. Operational constraints and reduced train capacity

- **Unsuitable infrastructure parameters with reduced train length, weight and loading capacity:** On some diversionary routes, trains are restricted to a maximum of **1,200 tonnes and 535 metres**. Such restrictions directly reduce the amount of freight that can be transported per train.
- **Some diversionary routes are technically available but cannot provide a viable operational alternative.**
For example:
 - The Romanian section of the **Vidin–Golenți–Craiova** route is in poor condition, meaning that very few trains could operate and at speeds of only around **30 km/h**.
 - The Bulgarian section of the **Vidin–Mezdra** route also faces operational constraints due to steep gradients. In the Dimovo–Oreshets section, the gradient reaches 29‰, while in the Dimovo–Makresh section it reaches 28‰. These **steep gradients also result in speed restrictions**, further limiting the operational performance of the route.
 - The alternative route via **Kardam–Negru Vodă** cannot accommodate intermodal trains due to a maximum weight restriction of **1,000 tonnes**. In addition, the section is **diesel-operated and subject to speed restrictions**, which further limits its suitability for intermodal traffic.
 - Even where degraded lines can technically be used, restrictions may create additional operational and safety risks.
- **Longer transit times:** In almost all cases, diverting trains increases planned transit times. Longer journeys also reduce the number of trains that can be operated with the same resources.
- **Additional track access charges:** Alternative routes are often significantly longer than the originally allocated path, generating additional track access charges and increasing the cost of rail freight.

2. Additional locomotives, drivers and operational resources for RUs

- **More locomotives and locomotive drivers:** Longer transit times require more locomotives and drivers to maintain the same level of service.
- **Additional route knowledge requirements:** Staff normally assigned to a particular route may require additional training and route knowledge (*Streckenkenntnis*) before they can operate on diversionary routes.
- **Different locomotive requirements:** Some diversions require locomotive types that are not normally used on the original route. For example, diversions through Germany, France or Romania over non-electrified lines may require **diesel traction**.
- **Loss of pre-booked resources:** Electric locomotives already booked for the original route cannot be used, and RUs must find diesel locomotives, creating additional costs and operational complexity.

3. Congestion and loss of network capacity

- **Increased congestion:** Diverted freight trains are transferred onto routes that may already be highly overbooked. **This creates a cascading effect across the European network**, affecting the performance of the diversionary route and other traffic using it.
- **Allocated train paths become unreliable:** Timetabled or assigned paths may no longer be achievable in practice because of increased congestion.

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- **Network capacity cannot be guaranteed:** As congestion increases, RUs cannot reliably guarantee the overall capacity or service levels required by their customers.

4. Poor corridor-level coordination

- **Closures and diversions can be affected simultaneously:** A route may be closed while the designated diversionary route is also subject to infrastructure works.
- **Lack of corridor perspective:** Decisions taken independently on different sections of a European freight corridor can result in multiple restrictions occurring at the same time.
- **Key corridors can effectively be interrupted:** When the original route is closed and the alternative route is unavailable, unsuitable or severely congested, there may be no genuinely viable route for freight traffic.

5. Border delays and uncertainty for staff and customers

- **Border transit times can reach 20 hours.**
- **Drivers may be left waiting** for extended periods with little information about when they will be able to continue. This creates:
 - concerns about staff wellbeing;
 - concerns about the status and security of cargo;
 - uncertainty for RUs and their customers;
 - additional difficulties in maintaining planned schedules and service commitments.

6. Consequences for strategic industrial supply chains and customers

- **Supply-chain security is compromised:** Unpredictable transit times, capacity restrictions, border delays and unreliable train paths affect all stakeholders along the supply chain.
- **Key industrial sectors and flows disrupted or forced to reduce production:** The steel, automotive and chemical industries, have been directly impacted by disruption on the rail network. Agricultural and cereal flows as well as mineral oil and energy supply have been affected as well.
- **No alternative solutions at short notice for customers:** For many of these flows, alternative transport capacity cannot be mobilised at short notice or at a comparable scale. Prolonged or simultaneous restrictions can therefore affect production schedules, industrial sites, ports and terminals, and ultimately security of supply.
- **Reliability and credibility are weakened:** RUs are increasingly unable to guarantee the service levels promised to customers, even where the disruption is outside their control.

7. Risk of permanent modal shift from rail to road

- **Freight shifts from rail to road:** Customers facing unreliable rail services may move volumes to road. Once customers have established alternative logistics solutions on the road network, it can be difficult to bring those volumes back to rail, directly contradicting the EU's Green Deal and modal-shift objectives.
- **Some cargo cannot simply be replaced by road:** If particular freight cannot be transported by road under equivalent conditions, both the RU and the customer can suffer direct losses.
- **Europe risks undermining its own rail policy:** Infrastructure disruption that makes rail unreliable can therefore produce the opposite of the intended policy outcome

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FOUR actions for Europe that need to be implemented urgently

ACTION 1: Plan infrastructure works around the needs of the network's customers

Infrastructure managers should quickly adopt more client-oriented behaviour. They should consider the impact of planned works and route closures on freight traffic much earlier in the process. For example, concentrate heavy works in low demand periods of the year (August). The Commission and sufficiently funded Regulatory Bodies should verify compliance with the existing legislation. Dialogue between IMs and RUs should be held more regularly. There is a need for a broader understanding that the success of rail is possible only through efficient cooperation among all actors rather than a zero-sum approach that is getting nowhere and weakening all.

ACTION 2: Coordinate closures across borders

Works and closure windows should be coordinated between IMs of neighbouring countries on lines hosting cross-border traffic. Where possible, works should be scheduled sequentially rather than simultaneously to ensure continuity of traffic on European Transport Corridors.

ACTION 3: Compensate Railway Undertakings and rail freight operators

Freight RUs have to bear significant extra costs due to longer alternative routes and subsequent higher TACs while they lose clients due to poor reliability of the network. They should benefit from TAC reduction and dedicated support schemes to compensate for these higher costs. The new State aid Land and Multimodal Transport Guidelines (LMTG) applicable since 30 March 2026 allows such possibility. The new Transport Block Exemption Regulation also exempts some categories of aid from prior notification to the Commission. It includes possibilities linked to external cost reduction.

ACTION 4: Do not wait until 2031!

Rail freight operators and shippers cannot wait until timetable 2031 to see some of the improvements that will hopefully take place with the implementation of the Capacity Regulation (EU) 2026/1184. They cannot wait another five years for meaningful improvements whereas they struggle for their survival and the financial equilibrium of their operators at this very moment. Progress is needed now.

Now is time to act and work together, Infrastructure Managers, Railway Operators, Competent Authorities and Corridors Coordinators, take joint action and make the difference for a resilient rail freight system in Europe.

Relaunch rail freight, do not let it stop!

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ANNEX – Non-exhaustive list of lines affected by capacity restrictions recently and in the near future

(information known to ERFA on the day of publication)

<u>Lines sections</u>	<u>Planned closure windows</u>	<u>Latest information and effects</u>
Rosenheim – Salzburg (Austria-Germany)	From 05 May 2027 to 09 September 2027	
Lindau Aeschbach – Kressbronn (Germany)	From 29 June until 24 July 2026	Extension to 05 October Communicated on 24 July
Extensive construction work planned on Berlin-Frankfurt (Oder) (Germany)	Regular capacity restrictions and partial closures from 24 August until 09 December 2027	Coincide with renovation of Lehrte-Berlin corridor renovation from 02 October to 11 December 2027 and temporary reduction of capacity on Hanover-Magdeburg-Berlin route that is intended to serve as the main detour.
Troisdorf – Wiesbaden (right bank of the Rhine) (Germany)	From 10 July 2026 to 11 December 2026	Currently on schedule
Obertraubling – Passau (Germany)	From 14 June to 11 December 2026	Currently on schedule
Fulda – Hanau (Germany)	From 13 August 2027 to 04 February 2028	
Cologne Bridges (Germany)	From September 2028 until March 2030	High impact for international freight traffic as cannot be rerouted via Cologne Main Station
No electricity for freight trains (Hungary)	Restriction on the operation of freight trains between 17:00 and 22:00 each day; from 01 to 07 August.	Uncertainty about the level of Danube river as it serves to cool down only Hungarian nuclear power plant, the first source of electricity of the country.
Frejus line (Italy-France)	Closure of the Bussoleno – Bardonecchia section from 11 September to 08 October. As well extended recurring night closures on the Torino Modane section.	Two closures of cross-border lines linking Italy with its neighbours partially overlap. Additional restrictions disrupt once again the axis as traffic volumes are still recovering from the impact of the 19-month closure caused by the Maurienne landslide.

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Tarvisio – Villach (Italy/Austria) Connection to north-east Italy (Udine, Trieste, Venice, Ravenna, ...)	Total closure from 22 August to 20 September/ no detour via Slovenia possible	
Brenner – Bressanone/Verona axis (Italy/Austria)	Several suspensions of sections in July-August 2026	Major restriction on the Scandinavian-Mediterranean freight axis and one of Italy's principal gateways to Austria and Germany.
Iselle – Domodossola (Italy/Switzerland)	Line interruption between 26 June-26 July 2026	Cross-border Simplon freight axis. Rerouting via Luino and Chiasso
Candiolo line and access to Candiolo terminal (Italy)	Approximately 1,5 months	Closure will make Candiolo terminal completely inaccessible.
Cremona railway node (Italy)	Total closure 06-26 July 2026	
Roma – Naples via Cassino and Frosinone (Italy)	05-24 February and 06-23 August 2026	Complete suspension of freight traffic to/from Frosinone
Milan – Genoa, S. Martino Cava-Bressana Bottarone (Italy)	Single track between 03 June and 19 July, full line closure between 20 July and 28 August, single track between 29 August and 30 September	Important access axis between Northern Italy and Ligurian port system.
Vendas Novas line (Portugal)	Construction works up until Q1 2030 with partial closures on weekdays and weekends for the entire period.	Only path currently available between South and North of the network, and to connect port of Sines to Spain.
Leixões line (access to the Leixões port) (Portugal)	Construction work until Q1 2028 with partial closures and operational limitations	Only gateway to access Leixões Port with reduction of capacity for this period
Poceirão Bombel line (access to port of Sines) (Portugal)	Capacity limitation until end of works in Q2 2030	Connectivity with Sines Port with capacity reduction for 4 years
Minho line (Portugal)	Partial closure until Q2 2027 (works coincide with total closure on the Spanish side), works will continue until Q4 2029	Connection to Galicia (Spain)
Ovar-Gaia (Portugal)	Partial closure and operational limitations until Q2 2029	
Beira Alta line (Portugal)	Speed limitations despite completion of works on September 2025	Sidings to access Beira Alta Line to be completed
Beira Baixa line (Portugal)	Total closure since February 2026 due to storms occurred in January/February	Expected to end in September 2026

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Eastern line (Portugal)	Capacity limitations due to lack of human resources from the side of the IM	Connection to Badajoz (Spain)
Connection to port of Setubal (Portugal)	Capacity limitations during works (Q2 2026 – Q2 2027)	May affect automotive transport operations.
Giurgiu Nord–Ruse Danube bridge (electrification of line in RO) (Romania/Bulgaria)	Expected End of 2026 and continuing till December 2027, or possibly (8-10 months)	Pending communication by Romania
Bucharest–Craiova (Romania)	Under intensive construction until 31 August 2026	
Niš–Dimitrovgrad line (Serbia-Bulgaria)	Expected second half of 2026 for at least 200 days and continuing in 2027	Pending communication by RS
Ljubljana – Divaca (Slovenia)	Construction works, SZ Infrastructure cut train-path for every RU minus 20% Will last until December 2026, maybe longer.	
Tarragona-Barcelona (Castellbisbal-Martorell-Can Tunis, Roda de Bara) (Spain)	Different periods between 2023 and 2026	Repeated restrictions affecting domestic and international freight.
ADIF Can Tunis terminal (Spain)	August 2025 up until the first half of 2027 (forecast)	
Zaragoza-Teruel-Sagunto (Spain)	February 2025-December 2026)	
Zaragoza-Madrid (Spain)	April 2025-December 2026	
Cordoba-Algeciras (Spain)	January-July 2026; August 2026-December 2026	On top of flood-related closure in January-July 2026.
Several sections in Galica (Spain)	April 2026-April 2027 (forecast)	
Barcelona up to the French Border (LFP Perthus) (Spain)	January-June 2026	As part of the closure of the Rubí tunnel.

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