



Joint Press statement – immediate release Sunday 7 June 2009

The rail freight sector needs EU action NOW!

Major global and European customers, shippers, forwarders, independent train operators and other representative interest groups are calling on Transport Ministers meeting at the Transport Council on 11-12 June 2009 to accelerate liberalisation of the rail freight sector at this time of economic crisis.

Three major obstructions to liberalisation can be cleared if ministers and the Commission have the courage and political will to:

1. Approve the draft Regulation on the European rail network for competitive freight. The European Parliament completed its scrutiny before the election. Why should the Council of Ministers delay it further?
2. Require the Commission to proceed this month with infraction proceedings against member states for their failure to implement the 2001 First Railways Package. The first set of letters went out a year ago – why such a long delay in following them up?
3. Require the Commission to publish its proposed Recast of the First Railway Package by September 2009.

All these measures are capable of resolution now. Ministers must act now to enable the rail freight industry to develop strong, efficient and competitive services. These measures will enable an efficient European single market in rail freight to develop, bringing both economic and environmental benefits to member states. At present, member states still act in a very uncoordinated way, which makes cross-border rail freight services, especially for new entrants, extremely difficult and expensive. Clearly this Regulation is necessary to *require* them to co-operate.

Member states must also resist the temptation to impose barriers to effective European trade by providing state aids to freight companies that they own, and which would enable these companies to compete unfairly with the private sector. Where such state companies are in financial difficulties, they should be sold to the private sector.

Members of these organisations, comprising the majority of the European transport and logistics industry, traders, manufacturers and many train operators, all wish to increase their use of rail so that they can obtain or provide efficient, cost effective and reliable services.

They may compete with each other and with other modes but they all need a single market for freight on rail, as should be the case for all modes of transport.

Such companies will invest to improve services and efficiencies if they can have the confidence that they can have fair and consistent access to tracks and terminals, sidings and last miles, service reliability for the whole chain (including trains, loading and unloading processes, dispatching), minimal technical and legal problems with frontiers and a reasonable priority for the goods being transported.

At present, companies hold back investment because of a lack of confidence in European and member states' policies on such issues. EU action will increase private sector investment to the benefit of all parties.

Organisations supporting this statement:

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