

Press Release – Modal Shift Requires Joint Commitment of Railway Undertakings, Infrastructure Managers and Policy Makers

23 May 2023

On 23 May, ERFA held an event on the need to find a better balance between extensive works on the European railway network and ensuring a sufficient quantity and quality of capacity remains available for rail freight. It is a critical topic as without upgrading the network, it will not be possible to double rail freight by 2050, whereas without a focus on short-term capacity management, it will not be possible to increase rail freight volumes by 50% by 2030.

Due to the need to ensure both modal shift targets set out in the European Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy are achievable, a balanced approach is needed between works management and capacity management. Given that over 50% of rail freight volumes cross at least one national border, it is critical that this is carried out in a coordinated manner between infrastructure managers across all corridors.

Regarding coordination, the discussion must shift from solely a discussion on coordination of works to an agreement on coordination of alternative capacity. Infrastructure Managers must implement a system whereby as much alternative international capacity is made available as possible in the event of capacity restrictions. This alternative capacity should take into consideration the parameter needs of rail freight as much as possible.

In order to maximise the possibilities for rerouting, Infrastructure Managers must assess the possibility of using capacity in neighboring Member States. The European Commission should explore allowing for derogations in European legislation (Train Drivers Directive, Railway Vehicle Authorisation) to allow for rail freight to utilize infrastructure in neighbouring Member States in the event of international rerouting subject to it being deemed safe to do so by the relevant National Safety Authorities and the driver having sufficient route knowledge.

ERFA President, Dirk Stahl, stated, *“modal shift is not solely the responsibility of rail freight companies, but also policy makers and infrastructure managers. Rail freight companies cannot achieve modal shift alone in the next years in the context of extensive infrastructure constraints on core networks and increasing customer expectations on the performance of rail freight.”*

ERFA Secretary General, Conor Feighan, concluded, *“during the upcoming “Greening Transport Package”, the European Commission should explore how to remove barriers to international rerouting of freight and ensure better cross-border capacity management overall.”*

For more information, you can Contact:

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