

## Input paper on simplification of language requirements

- In order to attract and retain customers to use rail freight services, railway undertakings must be able to offer quality, reliable services that offer customers a consistent and predictable time of arrival at a price that competes with the equivalent road service.
- Many rail freight services cross the borders of countries where different languages are spoken. At the moment European legislation states that locomotive drivers must be B1 level competency in every country in which they drive a train.
- This means that rail freight operators must invest in expensive training and that they must carefully roster their train drivers to only drive on certain routes. In addition, when lines are closed for planned engineering works or during an unforeseen event and there is a need to divert a train, the absence of a driver with suitable language skills can result in the cancellation of the train. This issue was highlighted in a dramatic way following the Rastatt tunnel collapse incident of 2017.
- This adds costs to rail freight operations which are not borne by HGVs. There is no requirement for a HGV driver to have any knowledge at all of the language of the country he is driving through. This creates an uneven playing field.
- Rail freight operators do not want to compromise safety levels to the level of road operations, but instead put forward a transition plan with the long-term aim of increasing flexibility and reducing long term costs.
- **ERFA urges the European Commission to adopt a simple and pragmatic approach in the implementation of the proposal of amending Annex VI of the TD Directive to allow pilots of changes to language requirements for cross border traffic.**
- **ERFA intends to submit to the European Commission at least 2 pilots at key borders to trial reduced language requirements through agreeing local arrangements that are safe and practical. The Swiss model represents a very good example. The language requirement is A1+, the system works and the safety concerns are managed cleverly. What is good for Switzerland could be good for other countries. Roll out lessons learned from trials at borders and then extend on to corridors.**
- **It is important to develop a glossary of key commands that can be used by both signallers and drivers, for example, if there is a need for urgent evasive action. Change the safety requirement so that only training is needed on the local language for an agreed list of key commands, rather than at B1 level. This could be supported by visual material in the train cab. This could be trialed and then rolled out across all Member States.**
- **In the longer term ERFA urges a change to English as a common language, across all rail networks, on a similar basis to airlines. We recognise that this is a long-term aim, but development work for his project should begin now so that all parts of the railway can consider recruiting staff with English language skills who will be the train drivers and signallers in 10 years time.**
- **Long term aim is to eradicate the need for B1 training for drivers and improve the flexibility, reliability and efficiency of the offering to customers**

