

Press Release – Revision of Train Drivers Directive Needed to Reflect Reality of European Rail Freight Operations

30 September 2022

The revision of the Train Drivers Directive will play an important role in ensuring rail freight can achieve its modal shift objectives. With the closing of the public consultation on the revision of the Directive, it is important that the European Commission adopts an approach which ensures the train driver certification process ensures a high level of safety of operations whilst also introducing greater flexibility and ensuring that language requirements do not become a bottleneck to the good functioning of the European rail freight market.

ERFA accepts the overall requirements for language skills of train drivers. Reduced requirements should however be allowed for border crossing areas and when operating on diversion routes for a limited period. This is essential as without flexibility, the need for a changing of drivers and/or locomotives at national borders will increasingly lead to border crossings becoming bottlenecks for rail freight. In the short term, this can be achieved by lowering language requirements for train drivers on international traffic within a certain range of a border crossings with the necessary linguistic support in place by infrastructure managers. In addition, the existing exemptions of language requirements in countries with more than one official language should be maintained.

In the mid and long-term, work should continue towards the use of technical support (translation tools) and English as a standard language for rail freight operations, but it must be recognized that is not a short-term fix. Any legislative proposal must introduce short-term solutions to ensure internal borders do not become artificial barriers to traffic whilst also developing a long-term solution.

ERFA President, Dirk Stahl, stated, *“the current situation, whereby rail freight undertakings are trying to operate in a European freight market with a drivers certification programme that is severely outdated, is undermining the sector’s ability to grow. Safety remains and will continue to be the ultimate priority in training. This can be achieved though whilst also developing a modern certification programme that contributes towards smoother border crossings and general operations”*.

ERFA Secretary General, Conor Feighan, concluded, *“Short and long-term solutions are needed in legislation. In the short-term, there is a need to explore how best to facilitate international freight trains. In the long-term though, work needs to continue towards technical*

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support tools and a standardized language for train drivers, particularly those operating on international rail freight lines.”

Access the ERFA Position Paper on the Train Drivers Directive [here](#).

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