



## **Press Release, under embargo until 20 March (13.00h)**

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### **Road and rail unite to reduce accidents and fatalities at level crossings**

**Each year too many people die in accidents at level crossings. To reduce the number of these accidents, the road and rail sectors are working together to raise awareness of the risks of misbehaving around level crossings. This was agreed in Brussels on 20 March when safety experts from rail and road organisations signed the European Road Safety Charter.**

At least 600 people fall victim to accidents at level crossings every year. This accounts for 2% of road deaths and a third of all rail accidents. By signing the European Road Safety Charter road and rail organisations acknowledge their shared responsibility to deal with this issue. The charter is an initiative of the European Commission, with the objective of developing concrete actions, assessing results and further heightening awareness about the need to reduce traffic accidents and fatalities through the exchange of best practices in traffic safety in Europe, while adding a European dimension to individual or collective initiatives.

European Commission Vice-President and Transport Commissioner, Antonio Tajani, welcomed the signature of the charter by the railway associations CER, EIM and UIC, and the European Level Crossing Forum (ELCF), which gathers safety experts from both road and rail organisations. He said: "Road safety is a priority issue for the European Commission. Many of us, in one way or another have been touched by road accidents. This is why it is also my personal conviction that such initiatives should be encouraged. I therefore welcome that road and rail stakeholders have taken the initiative to tackle this challenge together. I am sure that activities like the European Level Crossing Awareness Day will help to improve the safety at level crossings."

The European Awareness Day on level crossings is a joint commitment that will be organised in June 2009 with a focus on educational measures and the promotion of safe behaviour. It will link a series of national events on the same date, constructed around the common theme "Stop accidents! Europe for Safer Level Crossings!". Currently, rail sector and road organisations from 20 countries but also a number of European instances, which are all members of ELCF, have agreed to participate in the European Awareness Day and it is hoped that more will join in the next few months. In addition, the website [www.levelcrossing.net](http://www.levelcrossing.net) will soon become a platform for detailed information on good practices and educational material designed to highlight the issue of risky behavior at and around level crossings.

\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*



**Note to editors:**

The European Awareness Day will be a collaborative effort built on existing national events which will be held jointly at various locations in every participating Member State around a common theme and message. The project involves the European Commission, the European Railway Agency (ERA), government agencies from many Member States, the road sector, railway undertakings, rail infrastructure managers and their European associations (CER, EIM), the International Union of Railways (UIC), ELCF, the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), media.

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The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together more than 70 European railway undertakings and infrastructure companies. CER represents the interests of its members towards the European institutions as well as other policy makers and transport actors. CER's main focus is promoting the strengthening of rail as essential to the creation of a sustainable transport system which is efficient, effective and environmentally sound. For more information, see [www.cer.be](http://www.cer.be)



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EIM, the association of European Rail Infrastructure Managers, was established to promote the interests and views of the independent infrastructure managers in Europe, following liberalisation of the railway market, with a view to supporting the development of the rail industry. It is a lobbying organisation which also provides technical expertise to the appropriate European bodies. To find out more about EIM, visit [www.eimrail.org](http://www.eimrail.org)



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The International Union of Railways (UIC) is the worldwide organisation for international cooperation among railways and gathers 201 members on all 5 continents. The UIC main missions are to promote rail transport across the world in order to cope with current challenges of mobility and sustainable development, by enhancing international cooperation between its members, building a consistent railway system and achieving projects of global dimension. For more information, see [www.uic.asso.fr](http://www.uic.asso.fr)



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The ELCF is an informal group that brings since 2005 together rail and highway safety experts from European countries including a number of European instances such as the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) and the European Railway Agency (ERA), in order to exchange information, provide experiences and lessons for improving the management and performance of level crossings. To find out more about ELCF, visit [www.levelcrossing.net](http://www.levelcrossing.net).