

News Release, 9 December 2008

Rail sector disappointed by EU Ministers' failure to agree on making transport greener

Today in Brussels, Europe's rail sector voiced regret over the failure of EU Transport Ministers to reach agreement on the revision of the Eurovignette directive, which aims at unlocking the current restrictions that prevent Member States from internalising the various elements of external costs into prices for the use of road infrastructure.

UNIFE, EIM and CER, representing Europe's rail sector, understand that a number of controversial points prevented agreement between the EU Member States concerned, including the earmarking of the revenues raised through charging and the application of congestion costs to trucks only.

UNIFE Director-General Michael Clausecker stated that despite the lacklustre outcome of today's Council meeting, Europe's rail sector still appreciates the efforts undertaken by the French EU Presidency in trying to reach an agreement. "It has not been easy, but we believe that the French EU Presidency realised the importance of levelling the playing field between the transport modes. There was no agreement this time but Europe's rail sector still hopes that the European Parliament will send a strong signal to the Council. The report presented by the Parliament's rapporteur Said El Khadraoui, puts forward the principle of earmarking and the extension of the range of external costs to be internalised - this is something which we as a sector support."

EIM Secretary General Michael Robson commented, "The burden is now on the European Parliament and the incoming Czech Presidency of the EU to move this important dossier forward. We hope that all sides can work together to reach an agreement before the European Parliament elections in June 2009. From our side, we look forward to working constructively with the Czech Presidency in forging an agreement amongst all stakeholders on this vital legislative initiative, which will remove road freight's privilege to pollute without paying."

Speaking on behalf of CER, Executive Director Johannes Ludewig stressed: "If Europe really wants to achieve a greening of its transport sector, the principle of internalisation of external costs must be introduced for road transport as well! The fact that trucks would not be charged for their external costs, clearly favours the most polluting transport mode - while we understand that the current economic crisis creates difficulties, it is vital that the EU's environmental targets must be met."

ENDS



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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 vis-à-vis 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

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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. 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

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UNIFE represents 62 of Europe's leading large and medium-sized rail supply companies active in the design, manufacture, maintenance and refurbishment of rail transport systems, subsystems and related equipment. A further one thousand suppliers of railway equipment partake in UNIFE activities through 18 national rail industry associations. UNIFE members have an 80% market share in Europe and supply more than 50% of the worldwide production of rail equipment and services.

UNIFE represents its members' interests at the level of both European and international institutions. On the technical side, the association works on the setting of interoperability standards and coordinates EU-funded research projects that aim at the technical harmonisation of railway systems.

UNIFE's mission is to pro-actively develop an environment in which UNIFE members can provide competitive railway systems for increased rail traffic. For more information, see www.unife.org