

Press Release, 13 January 2009

## New pesticides legislation should not jeopardise rail safety

Europe's rail sector welcomes the more flexible approach towards the use of pesticides as approved by Members of the European Parliament in today's plenary vote in Strasbourg. However, CER and EIM warn that national implementation of the new rules must ensure that safety on the railways is not compromised.

The Pesticides Package proposed by the European Commission aims to establish a framework for achieving a more sustainable use of pesticides and to reduce the risks and impacts on humans, animals and the environment. MEPs voted overwhelmingly in favour of a compromise text agreed by the three EU institutions. While the approach taken by MEPs is less restrictive than originally feared, the new legislation could restrict the ability of railways to use chemical solutions to maintain the safety of the rail network.

Pesticides are used to maintain rail tracks for safety reasons: with no vegetation control, the ballast bed would lose its shearing strength and elasticity, creating uncontrollable forces and seriously reducing the safety of the tracks. Track benches neighbouring the ballast bed must be kept free to be used as emergency routes and to allow track works. Additionally, vegetation alongside tracks needs to be controlled to ensure that drivers have clear view of all signals. Scientific evidence shows that there is currently no better method yet available to replace the responsible use of chemicals. The rail sector has already implemented internal measures and management systems to reduce to the minimum the use of pesticides and to ensure that they are used in only specific safety-related situations.

EIM Secretary General Michael Robson said, "Despite the fact the Parliament adopted a more flexible approach in today's vote, the Pesticides Package still contains a number of areas of concern for Infrastructure Managers. The imposition of buffer zones and other restrictions on the use of plant protection products could pose problems for safely maintaining Europe's railways."

CER Executive Director Johannes Ludewig said, "While the railways are doing their utmost to minimise the use of pesticides, the use of plant protection products still remains necessary to ensure the safety and efficiency of the network. We look forward to working with stakeholders to find a solution that balances safety and environmental concerns."

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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](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. 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)