

Press Release 29.05.2008

EIM and France to work together for a successful EU Presidency

A high level delegation from the association of European Infrastructure Managers (EIM) had a fruitful meeting in Paris on Monday this week with Mr. Dominique Bussereau, French Secretary of State for Transport, to prepare the ground for the upcoming French Presidency of the EU. The meeting, held at the invitation of the French Transport Ministry, dealt with a number of current topics, including the proposed revision of the Eurovignette Directive, the creation of a Freight Oriented Network and the recast of the First Railway Package with a special focus on Multi-Annual Contracts.

The EIM delegation, which included top executives from six European Infrastructure Managers, and the French Minister debated a number of key issues that are likely to be at the top of the transport agenda of the French Presidency of the European Union when it takes office in July.

EIM stressed its priorities regarding the development of the Freight Oriented Network, the recast of the First Railway Package, Multi Annual contracts and the revision of the Eurovignette Directive. Regarding Freight Oriented Network, Luc Lallemand, CEO of Infrabel, asked that there be a particular focus on the standardisation of train lengths along key corridors, together with enhancing capacity to relieve bottlenecks on key corridors, as well as ensuring that access to and from key ports is included in the definition of corridors. Referring to the First Railway Package, Hubert du Mesnil, CEO of RFF, argued that before looking for new legislation, it is necessary to fully apply the existing one.

Mr. Bussereau indicated that a first presentation of the recast of the First Rail Package is planned for the December transport council. The EIM delegation called for a review of the role of regulatory bodies, the strengthening of performance schemes to include the requirement to publish performance data, and promoting the cross acceptance of authorised applicants.

The Minister also announced that France supports the concept of Multi Annual Contracts between governments and Infrastructure Managers, but underlined that many EU Member States are opposed to the mandatory imposition of such contracts across Europe. Michael Robson, Secretary General of EIM responded that if the Member States are not obliged to put long term contracts in place, there is a risk that the necessary investment in rail infrastructure will not be made.

The Minister confirmed that the French government will support the "Greener Transport" package, which will contain revisions to the Eurovignette Directive incorporating the "polluter pays" principle. EIM believes that the earmarking of Eurovignette revenues would provide the funds that are missing to achieve some European objectives such as a Freight Oriented Network. It would also help to level the playing field between all transport modes.

Michael Robson, Secretary General of EIM said "the meeting was an important opportunity for EIM and its members to put forward the issues facing railway Infrastructure Managers and to hear of the Presidency's plans face to face..." Both sides hope to carry on the dialogue throughout France's six months at the helm of the European Union.



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Notes to the Editor:

For further information and high resolution pictures of the meeting between EIM and Mr. Dominique Bussereau, please contact:

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** Please note that from 01.06.08, EIM's new address will be Rue de la Loi 28, B-1040 Brussels.