

Press release

Brussels, 3 May 2023



Rail social partners address Train Drivers Directive

On 27 April 2023, the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) in collaboration with Rail Forum Europe (RFE) held a policy debate on the revision of the Train Drivers Directive, in the presence of Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social rights and Livia Spera, Secretary General of the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), with particular focus on the topic of the communication regime and a single operational language. This follows the recent publication of a Joint CER/ETF Recommendation on the specific issue of the language and certification scheme.

The European Commission is currently working on a proposal for the revision of Directive 2007/59/EC on certification of train drivers, aiming to facilitate cross-border mobility of train drivers, address outdated provisions, ambiguous language, and possible scope adjustments. The overall goal is to attract more people to this essential occupation.

CER and ETF advised in their Joint Recommendation that the introduction of a single or an additional common European language (such as English) would constitute a massive disadvantage for the railway sector when competing with other modes of transport. Such language change would affect train drivers, as well as all professional job profiles in railway undertakings and infrastructure managers, particularly those responsible for safety-related activities.

CER underlined that a significant negative cost impact would be foreseen, in particular for infrastructure managers, without any real added value for the business. CER remains open to the definition of a target system for future communication in railways but underlines that it must be based on the operational reality, whilst maintaining the existing safety level, and a thorough hazard and cost-benefit analysis. Innovative language tools are available, as shown during the debate, which allow effective and safe communication and would remove the need to train all railway staff in English.

The recent Joint Recommendation was issued on 23 March under Article 154 (2) and (3) TFEU, and as the revision proposal concerns social policy, CER and ETF stress the need for these conclusions to be taken into account as the basis for any upcoming EU policy initiative.

European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit said: *"Today, as we strive to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate climate change, train drivers are at the forefront of the green transition. In light of this, policymakers must continue making sure that train drivers work under good conditions, get paid decent wages and benefit from continuous training. This is essential to attract more people to this critical occupation."*

RFE Chair Andrey Novakov MEP, said: *"The train drivers are the backbone of the rail sector. Besides respecting their responsible work, we have to ensure the quality of their job conditions and above all - their safety. Making rail jobs more attractive and*



competitive is one of the ways to achieve the EU's key objective to shift more traffic to rail."

ETF Secretary General Livia Spera said: *"Rail social partners have reached a clear position on the Train Drivers Directive revision. They have been proactively seeking dialogue with the Commission on this. At the moment, a controversial revision of the Commission's support for social dialogue is under discussion. The way the European Commission will decide to involve ETF and CER, and how the opinion of the two most representative organisations of the sector will be taken into account, will be a crucial test for the future of social dialogue in the EU."*

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"We are committed to interoperable railway services crossing borders with ease and transporting passengers and goods across the Union. English as an operational language is not an option as we cannot risk endangering our safety level and we must avoid an increase in costs without any real added value. We are open to defining a future target system and should carefully consider deploying the available electronic communication solutions to boost interoperability"*.

See also the CER-ETF Joint Recommendation on the Train Drivers Directive on the CER website [here](#).

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About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together around 70 railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 78% of the rail network length, 81% of the rail freight business and about 94% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policymakers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on Twitter [@CER_railways](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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About RFE

Founded by Members of the European Parliament from across the parliamentary committees, Rail Forum Europe is an international non-profit making association that aims at bringing together EU decision-makers and the rail sector to achieve a better understanding of rail related issues. Rail Forum Europe is governed solely by a Managing Board of MEPs, the President of which is Mr Andrey Novakov (Member of the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism). For more information on Rail Forum Europe, please contact info@rail-forum.eu or visit www.rail-forum.eu.