

# Rail sector still sees room for improvement in Greening Freight Transport Package

EU Transport Ministers today agreed on a General Approach on the Proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity and took note of the progress on the Combined Transport and Weights & Dimensions Directives. Part of the Greening Freight Transport Package, this legislation is vital to the rail sector as its impact will bring forward crucial changes to modal shift. The Community of European Railway & Infrastructure Companies (CER) welcomes the Council's General Approach as an important step towards the negotiations with the European Parliament but sees several areas of concern.

## Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity

A harmonised EU approach to capacity management is essential to facilitate the rapid expansion of cross-border rail transport at a time of scarce capacity. CER therefore regrets to see an explicit reference to the non-bindingness of **European Frameworks** in the Regulation proposal and urges Member States to ensure their effective implementation. CER welcomes the new **coordination dialogue** foreseen between Member States, European Coordinators, and the European Commission. However, it is also necessary to ensure a specific coordination mandate in the case of national guidance on conflict resolution to facilitate cross-border traffic. Moreover the **necessary EU funding** must be available to implement the Regulation, especially in view of the new European governance structure. CER also regrets the prolonged **enforcement timelines** introduced in the Regulation. The rail sector supports the original deadlines proposed by the Commission (i.e. 2026 for most of the Regulation and 2029 for certain provisions of capacity management). Finally, CER appreciates the inclusion of Infrastructure Manager **consultation with operational stakeholders** as a constant and participative dialogue. This will be a key for success, however we believe the Regulation should include a dedicated new platform representing the applicants requesting capacity – in particular railway undertakings – as a counterpart equivalent to the European Network of Infrastructure Managers (ENIM).

## Weights & Dimensions Directive

CER welcomes the intention to promote the decarbonisation of road freight, which was duly recognised in the previous amendments of the Weights and Dimensions Directive, allowing for the additional weight of zero-emission powertrains on Heavy Goods Vehicles. The most recent revision proposal however leads to several consequences that have not been fully assessed. CER and other European organisations have incessantly alerted to this fact, particularly the serious **risk of inducing a modal shift of freight from rail to road**, which is inconsistent with the need to decarbonise road transport and safeguard the highest possible **safety standards** in land transport. The debate in the Council has added to these concerns, particularly regarding the impact on road

infrastructure and road safety, both requiring additional investment from Member States. The proposal requires a further thorough assessment of its multiple impacts and, ultimately, of its added value, considering the already adopted measures to promote zero-emission vehicles in the directive currently in force.

### **Combined Transport Directive**

The proposal to revise the Combined Transport Directive is essential to enhance intermodality. With the correct incentives set in place, it can contribute to reduce the transport externalities and create synergies between policies, such as the promotion of zero-emission vehicles, which may optimally be combined with long-haul trips over rail. The search for a more intuitive **definition for Combined Transport** must also keep track of the need to reward the operations which achieve the highest possible external cost savings. Creating more certainty through a new definition must not open the door to misleading incentives claiming support in operations involving extremely extensive road legs – a concern recognised by several Member States in the Council. It is therefore crucial to keep **safeguarding provisions** already set in the Directive, such as maintaining the 150km radius for road legs to ports. CER encourages legislators to bear this in mind while proceeding forward.

**CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola** said: *“Today’s Council discussions pave the way for new important developments for the rail sector. We thank Member States for their efforts, particularly the Belgian Presidency for its good work over the past months. However, there are further improvements to be made and CER would like to see harmonisation of capacity management processes across Europe; in particular it is necessary to ensure a specific coordination mandate in the case of national guidance on conflict resolution to facilitate and not block cross-border traffic. Time is of the essence and we need to do it right if we want to optimise and boost existing capacity to meet the increasing demand”.*

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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 73% of the rail network length, 76% of the rail freight business and about 92% 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](http://www.cer.be) or follow us on Twitter [@CER\\_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cer).