

**Press Release,
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Trains set to power ahead as Europe plans for transport modes to bear their true environmental and social cost

Rail will play a key role in the future of sustainable transport, as Europe seeks to improve transport efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a communication on the future of transport published by the European Commission on 17 June claims. In line with what European rail infrastructure managers have long been calling for, the Commission document argues for the internalisation of the external costs of transport, more efficient use of existing infrastructure and the opening up of the transport market.

Michael Robson, Secretary General of EIM, the association of European Rail Infrastructure Managers, said *"We very much welcome this communication, which reflects much of our thinking on the future of transport in the coming decades, particularly in regards to market opening and making efficient use of infrastructure by reducing bottlenecks."*

The report calls for prices to reflect the true costs of transport, by ensuring that so-called external costs are included. In effect, this means implementing the polluter pays principle, which is not the case for all forms of transport. EIM has long argued in favour of this principle, which will ensure a level playing field for competition between all transport modes as well as a more efficient transport system.

Independent Rail Infrastructure Managers are very much in favour of market opening as called for in the Commission's Communication and work hard to ensure that new entrants have access to the network. EIM is particularly supportive of plans to open the passenger market in 2010, which could have environmental benefits as short-haul flights are converted into rail journeys.

While the Commission report criticised the transport sector for being over reliant on fossil fuels, electric trains have a very low carbon footprint. Continuing programmes by infrastructure managers across the EU to electrify railway lines, and to reduce energy consumption, will offer significant environmental benefits, while emissions from other sectors continue to grow.

However, while the communication does contain many positive elements, EIM criticised the Commission's suggestion that trans-national infrastructure managers would improve third-party access. Michael Robson pointed out that: *"As independent infrastructure managers providing open access to our customers we are astounded by this idea. Rather than eliminating borders, such an approach would inevitably lead to dominant players which are likely to have vested national interests and eliminate competition. The Commission should focus on the day-job of enforcing the existing requirements for proper regulation to open up markets. If existing legislation had been properly transposed across Europe with strong and independent regulation this problem would have been tackled already."*

The communication also notes that as public funding dries up, the transport sector will have to focus on making better use of existing infrastructure, rather than building new, by increasing capacity and reducing bottlenecks. EIM members have been working on reducing bottlenecks on the European rail



network, such as ADIF is doing with the mixed traffic new high speed line from Barcelona to the TP Ferro connection Figueras-Perpignan, connecting with the French network, or as ADIF and RFF are doing together at the Franco-Spanish border at Irun-Hendaye through the EEIG SEA Vitoria-Dax. *“This goal can also be achieved through the effective use of rail corridors, which allow infrastructure managers to ensure efficient end-to-end journeys across borders. This will require ambitious and bold thinking on the part of the European institutions on the proposed rail freight corridor regulation, which was recently approved in a watered-down form by the Council,”* said Michael Robson.

“EIM members are already taking innovative actions along the lines suggested in this report. Infrabel’s Diabolo project will link Brussels airport to the European High Speed Network, for instance, while in France, RFF is looking into the enhancement of an old line from Le Havre to Paris to remove bottlenecks, without investing in expensive new infrastructure,” Michael Robson continued.

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For further information please contact:

Patrick Keating
EIM Public Affairs Manager
phone +32 2 234 37 70
mobile +32 476 66 19 09
e-mail patrick.keating@eimrail.org
twitter: twitter.com/EIM_rail

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 or follow us on Twitter: twitter.com/EIM_rail