RELEASE: ERA REPORT ON FOSTERING THE RAILWAY SECTOR THROUGH THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL – PART 2 FREIGHT

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ERA is publishing its second report on fostering the railway sector through the European Green Deal focused on freight. It will serve as a contribution to the future initiatives that the European Commission will push forward to increase and better manage railway capacities.

At the peak of the Covid-19 crisis in April 2020, the estimated decrease in daily fossil CO_2 emissions due to global confinement was -17%. While the Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions kept increasing in 2019, the CO2 emissions decreased by about 6% in 2020 due to the economic activities' loss with the Covid-19 crisis. Most changes observed during the crisis do not reflect structural changes in the economic, transport or energy systems. Surface transport, being the second most emitting sector in the EU, accounts for nearly half the decrease in emissions during confinement. It is the one of the key sectors for reaching both the EU targets and the Paris Agreement objectives.

The European Commission has built a strategy for sustainable and smart mobility at the end of 2020 in which it sets objective to double rail freight traffic by 2050. Although freight traffic has increased significantly in the past few decades, this increase was mostly true for the road sector. Indeed, rail freight showed an annual average increase of 4.1% between 2015 and 2018 but its modal share decreased from 18.8 to 18.7%.

In its first report, ERA presented a strategy for a rail renaissance aiming at making it the backbone of mobility over the next 30 years. In this contribution, ERA advances six clusters of measures to promote rail freight and to develop reliable and seamless connections which should eventually help reaching the ambitious European policy goals. These are:

➔ to attract more private investments by ensuring a level playing field for all transport modes;
➔ to take full advantage of technological developments;
➔ to develop a green logistic chain through a multimodal strategy;
➔ to be more market-oriented by facilitating the access to the rail offer;
➔ to put the customer as the central focus; and
➔ to increase leadership by building a global vision of the logistics' chain impact.

"There is a great potential for rail freight to play a key role for achieving climate goals. I am convinced that massive improvements will be achieved, with a combination of push-pull factors and the necessary political will to change the framework", Josef Doppelbauer, Executive Director of ERA.

About the EU Agency for Railways

The European Union Agency for Railways was established in Valenciennes (offices) and Lille (meeting facilities) in 2004. Its 170 employees represent more than 22 European Member States and speak multiple languages. ERA has been providing EU Member States and the European Commission with technical assistance in the development and implementation of the Single European Railway Area. This comprises enhancing technical interoperability and harmonising rules, promoting simplified access for customers, developing a common approach to safety and safety culture, advising on telematics applications and ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System), monitoring National Safety Authorities and Notified Bodies and facilitating the exchange of information between the railway actors in Europe. Since 16th June 2019 the EU Agency for Railways is mandated to issue single safety certificates and vehicle (type) authorisations valid in multiple European countries and to ensure an interoperable European Rail Traffic Management System. The purpose of these activities is expressed by the slogan "Making the railway system work better for society."

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