

UNICE

THE VOICE OF BUSINESS IN EUROPE

25/10/2002

Dear Member of Parliament,

With a view to the upcoming vote on the second railway package in the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism, UNICE would like to reiterate its support for the Commission proposals to liberalise the European railway market further.

It is an important step in the context of the Lisbon strategy to accelerate the opening-up of international rail freight market to competition, and to extend liberalisation to domestic freight transport. Cabotage in rail freight transport is vital to optimise international (especially return) trips, allowing better use of capacity and thereby a better environmental performance and more competitive prices. The longer this decision is being delayed, the more difficult it will be for rail freight to reverse its declining market share. The target date for completion of the liberalisation process should therefore not be later than 2006, as proposed by Mr Jarzembowski in his draft report on the development of the Community's railways, and preferably even earlier than that.

UNICE also supports Mr Jarzembowski's proposal to allow shippers and freight forwarders to apply for slot capacity as well. It will reinforce the position of railway customers, providing incentives for railway companies to improve their service quality.

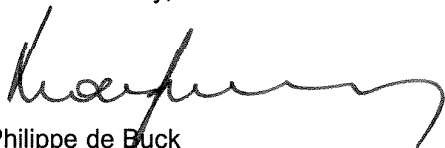
Concerning the draft report by Mr Sterckx on safety on the Community's railways, we would like to point out that it would not seem in the interest of a truly internal railway market to allow new national safety rules to be introduced. These could be used as protectionist instruments and should only be agreed at European level.

Concerning Mr Savary's draft report on the European Railway Agency (ERA), UNICE emphasises that the independence and the authority of the agency should be guaranteed. ERA should be leading in defining technical specifications for interoperability and safety, making use of the knowledge of railway industries and railway users.

Finally, UNICE stresses that the lack of interoperability between national networks is another important obstacle preventing rail from increasing its market share in international transport. Unlike the draft report of Ms Ainardi on interoperability of the trans-European rail system seems to suggest, interoperability on the conventional railway network is by no means finished yet, many technical problems still exist in cross-border operations, and a lot of work and additional investment is needed to eliminate them.

I thank you for the attention you may give to our views.

Yours sincerely,



Philippe de Buck
Secretary General