

## **Joint Press Release – Revision of Train Drivers Directive Essential to Growing International Rail Traffic**

05 September 2023

**International railway transportation experiences significant operational barriers compared to road and aviation through stringent language requirements which hinder the development of international travel. Whilst it is not appropriate to make like for like comparisons with other modes, or call for a copy and paste of systems, significant changes to existing requirements are needed to facilitate the growth of international rail transportation.**

Under existing rules, drivers are required to have a B1 knowledge of the national language on the network they are operating upon. This requirement has been developed to ensure that there is sufficient ability for train drivers and infrastructure managers to communicate with one another. The cost of this, however, is that the possibility of international rail traffic is curtailed due to changing rules at national borders. Today, at an event hosted by Barbara Thaler MEP in the European Parliament, the issue of how to create a language regime which allows for smoother cross border movements was discussed.

ALLRAIL and ERFA believe English should be introduced as a common language for international traffic in the revision of the Directive, whilst also maintaining existing national language requirements. This will mean that no new obligation is introduced for train drivers operating nationally whilst allowing for the smoother functioning of international traffic. For international traffic, a train driver would have to have a sufficient knowledge of the national language or English.

In this regard, it is essential that there is a strong incentive for the infrastructure managers to train their staff in English and the language of the neighbouring Member State so that not only railway undertakings carry the cost of language training.

Furthermore, regarding national language requirements, there should be a level of flexibility to allow for National Safety Authorities (NSAs) and Infrastructure Managers (IMs) to introduce derogations or lower language requirements for certain cross border operations or during temporary capacity restrictions where there is clear evidence that safety is not compromised.

A continued fragmentation of national requirements will undermine rail's ability to grow international traffic. It will also make it increasingly difficult for operators who operate international services to attract the necessary staff due to language requirements and the possibility of delays and train handovers, making working schedules unreliable.

It is therefore essential that the European Parliament and Council proactively work towards a language regime that does not introduce additional burdens on train drivers active in national traffic whilst also introducing a system that reflects the international nature of cross border traffic.

**MEP Barbara Thaler**, highlighted, *“Rail must free itself from the shackles of the past and transform itself into a European mode of transport, like aviation and road. A big step towards the Single European Railway Area is a common language for train drivers, I expect the Commission to come forward with a corresponding proposal and staunchly defend a European approach against the national backlash”*.

**ALLRAIL President, Dr. Erich Forster**, remarked, *“In 2020, nearly 90% of pupils in upper secondary education were learning English as a foreign language (EUROSTAT<sup>1</sup>). In conjunction with specialised rail communication training and the improvement of digital tools, introducing English as an alternative to national languages for international rail services would constitute a great step towards achieving the Single European Railway Area”*.

**ERFA President, Dr. Dirk Stahl**, stated, *“Over 50% of European rail freight services cross at least one national border. In the meantime, the European network is still made up of different national systems. This means that rail freight is trying to operate an international service in a patchwork of different national systems. Changes, including in the language topic, are required if rail freight is to become more efficient”*.

**ALLRAIL**, the Alliance of Passenger Rail New Entrants, represents private independent passenger railway companies. ALLRAIL advocates for faster market opening in passenger rail transport in Europe in order to accelerate modal shift to rail and reduce transport-related emissions.

**ERFA** is the European Association representing European private and independent railway companies. ERFA members share a commitment to work towards a non-discriminatory, competitive and innovative Single European Railway area.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Foreign\\_language\\_learning\\_statistics#Upper\\_secondary\\_education](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Foreign_language_learning_statistics#Upper_secondary_education)