

## PRESS RELEASE

# Driving a Train Through Europe Must Finally Become as Easy as Driving a Bus

BRUSSELS, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021: *“Rail Freight Forward”* (RFF)<sup>1</sup> is a coalition of European rail freight companies with the commendable goal of shifting 30% of all goods transported in Europe to rail by 2030. What does RFF want? Simple Answer: *“Driving a Train Through Europe Must Finally Become as Easy as Driving a Truck”*.

This can easily be converted to passenger rail too: Driving a Train Through Europe Must Finally Become as Easy as Driving a Bus. Passenger operators should be able cross internal EU borders on their own & not need to co-operate with others.

Therefore: it a blatant double standard that many of the state-owned rail incumbents who support Rail Freight Forward – and compete with each other in cross-border rail freight – do exactly the opposite in passenger rail, *co-operating* with each other instead. And they have no intention of changing this.

However: not only do such ‘co-operations’ reduce choice & keep ticket prices high, but they are also costly & slow. The “co-operation” bureaucracy (personnel & more) are an additional expense that is used to lobby for more PSO subsidy. Then, instead of acting nimbly, they must agree with each other before taking decisions.

**The cross-border cartel of state-owned passenger rail incumbents has failed.** The evidence is clear: most of them have already been colluding with each other for many decades, yet the modal split of cross-border rail remains low – at just 4%.

Rail Freight Forward’s goals<sup>1</sup> are right. Notably: its signatories include the Austrian, Czech & Polish incumbents ÖBB, ČD & PKP. But, if these three operators agree that driving a train through Europe should be as easy as driving by road, why do they collude on their passenger rail services between Austria, Czech Republic & Poland?!

Tomorrow, the EU Commission will present its new Action Plan in order to boost cross-border passenger rail. ALLRAIL Secretary General Nick Brooks states: *“In the EU Single Aviation Market, it would be unthinkable for each country’s dominant airline to collude with each other. So why is this still allowed in passenger rail?”*

There is a better solution: competition. On 18<sup>th</sup> December 2021, the Italian incumbent FS will start competing against French incumbent SNCF on long distance services between Milan and Paris. **This must be a shining example for the rest of Europe.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.railfreightforward.eu/>