



Press Release

Brussels, 26 February 2013

under embargo until 20.00h

Benedikt Weibel and Johannes Nicolin receive European Railway Award 2013

The European Railway Award 2013 was presented today to Benedikt Weibel, former CEO of the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB), for political achievements and to Dr Johannes Nicolin, Technical Director, AAE Holding AG, for technical achievements. Since 2007, the European rail sector has honoured outstanding political and technical achievements in the rail sector. The European Railway Award 2013 attracted more than 500 guests from all over Europe, including high-level politicians and transport stakeholders.

Keynote speaker of the gala evening once more was European Commission Vice-President Siim Kallas, who outlined key points of the recently released Fourth Railway Package. In his speech, he highlighted that *“Europe’s railways are on the brink of perhaps the most radical change in their history. The idea of having a real ‘European railway’ to join up our continent is very much alive. But we need now to take some radical decisions to restructure Europe’s railway market to encourage innovation and the provision of better services. Rail will then be able to grow further, to the benefit of citizens, business and the environment.”*

Representing the European Parliament, MEP Brian Simpson (S&D, UK), Chairman of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, remarked that *“This Fourth Railway Package is an important piece of legislation for the future of European railways. It is important in my view to keep both the political and the operational elements of this proposal together in a package and for us all to make a great effort to deliver a coherent set of reports that will lay down the foundations for a bright future for our railways.”*

CER Chairman and CEO of FSI Mauro Moretti explained: *“We fully support the European Commission’s proposal to reform the European Railway Agency and the opening of the railway market to competition. It is very important to simplify the authorisation procedures for railway subsystems and to have a European safety certificate for railway undertakings to allow a free flow of trains as it is already for aviation and road traffic. However, we have strong doubts about the governance and the PSO regulation.”*

UNIFE Chairman Henri Poupert-Lafarge added *“The European rail industry fully supports the Commission’s vision put forward in the Fourth Railway Package and is committed to make rail transport more reliable and sustainable for the benefit of the customers. In order to make this reality we have joined up forces in SHIFT²RAIL, the first European initiative to deliver focused research and innovation in the rail sector through radical step changes.”*



Benedikt Weibel had a major influence on the strategic direction of the Swiss Federal Railways in his fourteen years as CEO. He oversaw systematic and successful progress in long-distance, regional and international services, always focusing on customer needs. Under his leadership the density of trains per line kilometre increased by 25%. In his laudatory address to Benedikt Weibel, **Moritz Leuenberger**, former Swiss Transport Minister and laureate of the European Railway Award 2009, said: *"Benedikt Weibel has devoted his whole personality to the railways. He perfectly understands that railways are all about the people who use them and pay for their infrastructure and operations. No public support, no railways."* On a more general note, he added: *"If the trains are to run faster and better, the railways must be restructured slowly but surely."*

When accepting the award, Benedikt Weibel, stated: *"30 years ago the Swiss Federal Railways SBB launched the project Rail 2000. The ambition was to optimize the sum of all journey times on the whole network. After 20 years of project work and an investment of about nine billion SFr the new system was inaugurated in December 2004. Since then public transport is a real alternative in Switzerland. The offer is extremely simple: there is a train or bus from everywhere to everywhere, the same time every hour and often every half an hour, from early morning to late evening. In consequence the frequencies developed enormously."*

The laureate of the Technical Award 2013 **Dr Johannes Nicolin**, was introduced by **Fernand Rippinger**, CEO, CFL Cargo. Referring to Dr Johannes Nicolin's career, Mr Rippinger stated: *"Dr Nicolin, the prestigious European Railway Award has been awarded to you as a clear appreciation of the whole railroad community for the many, excellent contributions you made helping us in our move from antiquated, old fashioned railroads to technologically well advanced and highly competitive freight enterprises."*

Dr Johannes Nicolin served as Director of Engineering for freight cars and bogies at Waggonfabrik Talbot in Aachen, before he became Technical Director at AAE Ahaus-Alstätter Eisenbahn AG. His impressive range of innovations, especially in intermodal freight wagons helped increasing the customer value through reduced maintenance costs and enhanced handling efficiency. Johannes Nicolin always sought the overall improvement of rail freight competitiveness and system optimisation that went beyond the interests of a single company, and was a major player in the field of international harmonisation of freight technology. Many of the existing rail technical rules, such as those for freight wagon running behaviour, are based on his input, reflecting his broad competence in rail freight traffic as a whole.

Pictures of the European Railway Award 2013 and the CER and UNIFE Annual Reception will be available as of 27 February at www.europeanrailwayaward.eu.

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Background:

The “European Railway Award”

The European Railway Award honours outstanding political and technical achievements in the development of attractive, profitable, and environmentally sustainable rail transport. Each award is rewarded with €10,000 prize money, which is donated to charities of the laureates' choice, in this case *UNICEF Switzerland*, the United Nations Children's Fund, and *Speranza*, a Swiss NGO dedicated to assisting people in their search for work.

Past winners include European ERTMS Corridor Coordinator Karel Vinck (2012), Alstom Senior Vice-President and Technical Advisor Francois Lacôte (2012), former mayor of London Ken Livingstone (2011), Managing Director of Knorr-Bremse Austria Stefan Haas (2011), former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez Marquez (2010), former member of the board of DB and former Chairman of DB Netz Roland Heinisch (2010), former Swiss Transport Minister Moritz Leuenberger (2009), the inventor of the electronic train control system ETCS Bengt Sterner (2009), former Director General of SNCF Jean Dupuy (2007), and former Transport Commissioner Karel van Miert (2007).

The European Railway Award 2013 jury comprised CEOs of railway and rail industry companies as well as political decision makers, including MEP Brian Simpson (S&D, UK), Chairman of the Transport Committee in the European Parliament, and Matthias Ruete, Director-General of the European Commission's DG Mobility and Transport.

Benedikt Weibel - Laureate “Political Award”

Benedikt Weibel, former CEO of the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) (from 1993 to 2006) had a major influence on its strategic direction in his fourteen years as CEO of SBB. He oversaw systematic and successful progress in long-distance, regional and international services, always focusing on customer needs. The step-by-step system renewal of both the clock-face timetable and rolling stock, combined with steady continuity in marketing, were key to SBB's development. Under his leadership the density of trains per line kilometre increased by 25%. In December 2004, the successful completion of the first phase of Rail 2000, which consisted of some 130 projects with a budget of around CHF 5.9 billion, was the highlight of Benedikt Weibel's tenure. Rail 2000 has been a large-scale project of SBB/CFF/FFS, established in 1987 following approval in a referendum, to improve the quality of the Swiss rail network. It includes measures to improve a number of existing connections and the modernisation of rolling stock.

Dr Johannes Nicolin - Laureate “Technical Award”

Dr.-Ing. Johannes Nicolin served as Director of Engineering for freight cars and bogies at Waggonfabrik Talbot in Aachen, before he became Technical Director at AAE Ahaus-Alstätter Eisenbahn AG in 1995. He can look back on an impressive range of innovations, especially in intermodal freight wagons. All his innovations are targeted at increasing customer value through reduced maintenance costs and enhanced handling efficiency. Johannes Nicolin always sought the overall improvement of rail freight competitiveness and system optimisation that went beyond the interests of a single company, and was



a major player in the field of international harmonisation of freight technology. He had a strong input to UIC and later to ERA working groups. Many of the existing rail technical rules, such as those for freight wagon running behaviour, are based on his input, reflecting his broad competence in rail freight traffic as a whole.

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The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together more than 70 European railway undertakings and infrastructure companies. CER represents the interests of its members towards the European institutions as well as other policy makers and transport actors. CER's main focus is promoting the strengthening of rail as essential to the creation of a sustainable transport system which is efficient, effective and environmentally sound. For more information, see www.cer.be

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UNIFE represents the interests of the European Rail Industry towards the European institutions, international railway associations and other business relations. The European Rail Industry provides competitive railway systems for increased rail traffic and follows the objective of making rail transport the sustainable solution for the challenges of 21st century mobility. The European Rail Industry consists of trend setting industries in the field of rolling stock, infrastructure, information technology and signalling, provision of part and services. For more information, please visit www.unife.org