



The Voice  
of European  
Railways



## Press release

29 May

### Rail sector on track in developing 'silent' brakes

Railways are going to be closer to the significant reduction of its last environment burden - noise. This can be achieved thanks to positive results of extensive field tests of composite brake blocks in the context of the 'EuropeTrain' project, managed by the International Union of Railways (UIC) and supported by the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER). However, in order to accelerate an implementation of the new technology it is necessary to secure an appropriate funding mechanism.

The final report of the 'EuropeTrain' project, a testing programme with over 200 000 km of test run of wagons equipped with LL-type composite brake blocks across Europe, was presented on 28 May at the UIC headquarters in Paris. The two-year project delivered results enabling the move to the final stage - a full approval of LL brake blocks for international transport.

Noise is a side effect of all major modes of transport. While the perceived noise annoyance is much higher for air and road traffic than for rail, the reduction of noise is a key environmental priority for the railways. The rail sector has put much effort to achieve significant progress in noise abatement over the past 50 years. Furthermore, as part of the 'Strategy for 2030 and beyond for the European railway sector' jointly agreed by UIC and CER members, the rail sector aims that by 2050, noise and vibrations will no longer be considered a problem for the railways, with noise levels that are socially and economically acceptable and allow for 24-hour passenger and goods operations.

Implementing LL blocks is a key measure to further reduce noise emitted from freight wagons before the end of their natural lifecycle. This will help the rail sector to confirm its strong advantages compared to the other transport modes when considering the wider social and environmental impacts of different transport modes.

At the same time, the sector faces huge costs to relating to the necessary retrofitting of freight wagons for the LL block technology. In this context, the rail sector has engaged with the European Commission to ensure that retrofitting plans will not be jeopardising the competitiveness of rail transport. To make this happen, clear decisions and appropriate funding levels have to be agreed at EU level to ensure that retrofitting the existing freight fleet is economically viable with appropriate inventive schemes and funding originating from outside the railway system.

**UIC Director General Jean-Pierre Loubinoux** highlighted: *"The 'EuropeTrain' testing campaign, a wide-ranging and complex technical project managed by UIC in close cooperation with the 27 associated railway undertakings and industry partners, will provide the railway community with an important basis for possible decision-taking in a strategic issue: the equipment of large fleets of freight wagons with "silent" composite brake blocks. This objective of the reduction of noise emissions by freight trains, marks a new step towards more competitive and more sustainable rail freight transport in Europe."*



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CER Director General Libor Lochman said *“The rail sector has delivered good results in developing the right technology to retrofit the existing freight wagon fleet. At the same time, the EU has to ensure that funding is made available if a fast large-scale retrofitting programme is defined.”*

#### Notes to the Editor:

- A summary of the ‘EuropeTrain’ final report can be downloaded at <http://europetrain.uic.org/>
- The UIC ‘EuropeTrain’ project was managed on behalf of UIC and its members by Deutsche Bahn (DB), the appointed project manager being Dr. Johannes Gräber (DB Systemtechnik).
- The project involved 27 railway operators and 8 railway manufacturers.
- The main characteristics of the international testing campaign were as follows:
  - A test freight train made of 30 representative freight wagons from a number of European rail freight undertakings, which run across Europe only for the purpose of testing the LL brake blocks.
  - A mileage of at least 200 000 km.
  - A number of successive ‘test loops’ with technical evaluation after each loop. 16 runs were completed.
  - All operational conditions relevant for Europe including running on different gradients with different operational modes and extreme weather conditions (high and low temperatures).
- More information about the ‘EuropeTrain’ project is available at <http://europetrain.uic.org/>

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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](http://www.cer.be)

UIC, the international railway association which celebrates its 90th anniversary this year, counts 230 members across 5 continents (railway companies, infrastructure managers, rail-related transport operators, etc.). UIC’s members represent 1 million kilometres of lines, 2,800 billion passenger-km, 9,500 billion tonne-km, and a workforce of 6.7 million people.

UIC’s chief task is to promote railway transport around the world and support its members to meet all the current and future challenges of mobility and sustainable development.

UIC’s cooperative undertakings aim to boost the railway system’s competitiveness and interoperability, particularly on an international scale. The 700 technical leaflets which make up the “UIC Code” constitute a technical benchmark across the globe.

[www.uic.org](http://www.uic.org)