

7 December 2001 |

RAIL FREIGHT CUSTOMERS LAUNCH THEIR OWN PLATFORM TODAY

At a special meeting today (7 December 2001), European industry and trade organisations (CEFIC, CLECAT, ESC, FFE, UNICE), national rail freight customer organisations (Rail Freight Group UK, EVO - Netherlands) and private companies (DSM, USINOR, SAPPI EUROPE, ARS ALTMAN), took the decision to create a European Rail Freight Customers Platform.

Its objective is to unite the voice of rail freight customers in Europe, joining forces to pursue a genuinely free rail freight transport market, offering high quality and competitively priced freight services.

Rail freight transport's market share has declined dramatically in recent decades, from 21% in 1970 to 8% in 1998. The main reasons for this are lack of service quality, lack of interoperability between the national networks, lack of capacity and high costs. The platform considers the absence of competition in Europe the main culprit for this unsatisfactory state of affairs, and will strongly support the European Commission's upcoming proposals for further rail liberalisation.

Most importantly, the platform intends to start a constructive dialogue with the infrastructure managers and the rail companies, to make clear what rail freight customers expect from them in terms of service quality. The European rail market is finally moving, and the European Rail Freight Customers Platform is determined to maintain this momentum to arrive at a high quality and competitive rail freight service for Europe in the near future.

Note to the editor:

UNICE is the official voice of more than 16 million small, medium and large companies active in Europe, employing over 106 million people. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE's members are 33 central industrial and employers federations from 26 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

For further information, please contact:	Susanne Klunkert:	+32(0)2 237 65 62
	GSM:	+32(0)477 277 963
	Ewout Sandker:	+32(0) 237 65 44
	Website:	www.unice.org

CEFIC = European Chemical Industry Council; CLECAT = European Organisation for Forwarding and Logistics; ESC = European Shippers Council; FFE = Freight Forward Europe