

## ERA Executive Director: We reached a fundamental milestone for the establishing of the Single European Railway Area (*RailwayPRO*)

„By reaching a political agreement on the Technical Pillar of the Fourth Railway Package we experimented a fundamental milestone for the establishment of the Single European Railway Area; it took two years until this adoption because there were political pressures in Europe regarding the market opening, international operation, interoperability and safety. The transition period until the European Railway Agency has to be ready with the implementing of the Technical Pillar is 3 years.

EU member states may extend this period by one year, if they notify the ERA and the European Commission and justify the extension” Josef Doppelbauer, Executive Director, European Railway Agency, said on the occasion of the 2015 UNIFE General Assembly which took place on June 17 – 19 in Bucharest, Romania.

„The ambition of the Technical Pillar of the Fourth Railway Package is to support the European railway industry to be more competitive and to be able to offer quality railway services for freight and passenger transport”, Josef Doppelbauer added.

The aim of the changes is to cut administrative costs for rail operators and make it easier for new operators to enter the rail market. One of the main changes concerns the European Railway Agency (ERA). At the moment, it plays a key role in promoting interoperability and harmonising technical standards for the whole EU market. However, national technical and safety rules remain alongside the EU ones drafted by ERA, which creates unnecessary complexity for rail operators. The proposed revisions would make ERA the sole body responsible for issuing vehicle authorisations and safety certificates across the whole EU. Alongside the changes in responsibilities for ERA, the 4th railway package also includes updates to existing legislation on interoperability and rail safety. These changes aim to remove the remaining administrative and technical barriers to the creation of a Single European Railway Area.

Leaders of the European Rail industry gathered in Bucharest, Romania on the occasion of the 2015 European Rail Industry Association (UNIFE) General Assembly. UNIFE members selected Bucharest for their General Assembly this year to demonstrate their hope that Romania and other countries in the region will absorb available EU structural funds to invest in their rail systems and also to draw attention to the enormous potential of the Romanian rail market.

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