



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

The Director-General

Brussels,  
MOVE/C.3/MW/jt

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### **TSI Noise Revision: call for a ban on noisy wagons around 2020**

Dear Ms Krautzberger,  
Dear Mr Chardonrens,

I would like to thank you for your letter regarding the forthcoming TSI Noise revision. I fully agree with your opinion that rail freight noise constitutes the most important environmental problem of rail today. Noise levels during the night time in certain areas, e.g. along the route from Rotterdam to Genoa has, indeed, major negative impact on the wellbeing and health of the population living close to this railway corridor.

I am also aware that rail freight noise has become a particularly politically sensitive issue in some European countries like Germany. The excessive levels of railway noise can lead to uncoordinated unilateral actions of some countries. These unilateral actions could take the form of restrictions on rail freight traffic, in particular speed restrictions and restrictions on operating at certain times, especially at night. As freight trains operate mostly at night, such measures would likely result in bottlenecks, which, in turn, would have adverse effects on European economies and the railway sector as a whole.

Going it alone is not an option, as introduction of unilateral restrictions might bring about reverse modal shift, with freight being moved from rail to road to avoid the ban, and this is in no-one's interest. Thus, we strongly encourage Member States to align their national plans with the forthcoming EU-wide solution.

At present the most effective way to mitigate rail noise is by tackling noise at its source by retrofitting the existing freight wagons with composite brake blocks (LL - type). This technical solution reduces rail noise by up to 10 dB, which equals to a 50% reduction in audible noise for humans. It is also many times cheaper than for example construction of noise protection walls: retrofitting of one standard freight wagon is calculated at around EUR 1600 on average (or less if retrofitting is done in line with a regular maintenance period), while construction of 1 km of noise wall might cost EUR 1 million or more.

We consider that with the "quieter routes" approach we can strike the right balance between the divergent views to find a way forward which allows a satisfactory solution in particular for those locations where noise issue is a major problem and a serious health threat. It is also expected that the spill-over will trigger gradual retrofitting of the vast majority of the fleet.

I do not share your opinion that the solution is "unjust." On the contrary, the "quieter routes" will be identified on the basis of the same parameter across Europe. Furthermore, this solution will precisely allow tackling the areas with the highest noise exposure and not affecting other parts of network, where the traffic is sporadic. Secondly, the quieter routes approach might, indeed, induce some additional efforts in planning processes for railway companies but only if they do not retrofit. Thirdly, it should be emphasised that the German or Swiss model you refer to is not transferrable because of the financial costs of retrofitting.

Please note that that the discussions are now very advanced and it is expected that the European Union Agency for Railways will submit the draft revision of TSI Noise by the end of April.

Yours sincerely,



Henrik HOLOLEI