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Lords European Committee Report gives strong support for full liberalisation of the rail freight market.

Full separation of infrastructure manager from train operators, effective independent regulation with requirements for cross-border co-operation, mandatory rules and multi-annual contracts for infrastructure managers, full open access to sidings and facilities with a regulatory appeal mechanism are among the recommendations in this hard hitting Report on the failure of European railways to achieve the single market in rail freight for which legislation was first introduced in 1994.

The Report urges the European Commission to ‘pursue infraction proceedings vigorously’ against member states who have failed to implement the First Railway Package (2001) so that ‘the aim of an open and competitive rail market can be achieved and international rail freight can be encouraged further’.

RFG Chairman Tony Berkeley gave evidence to the Committee and commented ‘The Committee’s Report, based on a wide range of evidence from those involved in international rail freight, must add pressure on the European Commission to progress much faster to complete the process of creating a single market for rail freight across Europe.’

Specifically, the Report states that the European Commission must:

- move forward urgently on the infractions proceedings against those member states who are still not complying with the First Railway Package, which dates from 2001.
- Publish their proposed Recast of the First Railway Package to put right those issues which are seen to be ineffective and incomplete.’

In addition, RFG calls on the UK Government, whose evidence largely supports the findings of the Committee, to press hard for the faster progress on these issues. In his evidence to the Lords Committee, Transport Minister

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Lord Adonis said 'We are at the forefront...of the measures to strengthen the liberalisation of the European markets. We have been arguing strongly for this at the European level...and we will engage intensively to see that any proposals that the Commission wishes to make, which will strengthen the process of achieving liberalisation of the European freight markets, are carried into being'.

Tony Berkeley commented: 'this is a great commitment by our Government to enable UK businesses to operate and invest across Europe; we urge the Government to engage on these issues right now. No doubt the Select Committee will wish to examine progress by the Government in this regard when this Report is debated in the Lords in due course.'

Further information – RFG Chairman Tony Berkeley 07710 431 542

Report by House of Lords European Union Committee – Recast of the First Rail Freight Package, 2 June 2009.

Copy of Report:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldselect/ldcom/90/90i.pdf>