



Open letter

Monday, 4.9.2017

Federal minister Alexander Dobrindt  
Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure – Berlin

EU Commissioner Violeta Bulc  
European Commission for Transport - Brussels

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- > Transport Minister François Bellot, Belgium
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- > Transport Minister Graziano Delrio, Italy
- > Transport Minister François Bausch, Luxemburg
- > Transport Minister Melanie Schultz van Haegen, The Netherlands
- > Transport Minister Jörg Leichtfried, Austria
- > Transport Minister Doris Leuthard, Switzerland
- > EU Agency for Railways, Josef Doppelbauer

**Emergency of rail freight transportation – emergency of economy**

## **Rastatt disaster: Railways achieve only a quarter of transport volumes – Intermodal transport is particularly disadvantaged**

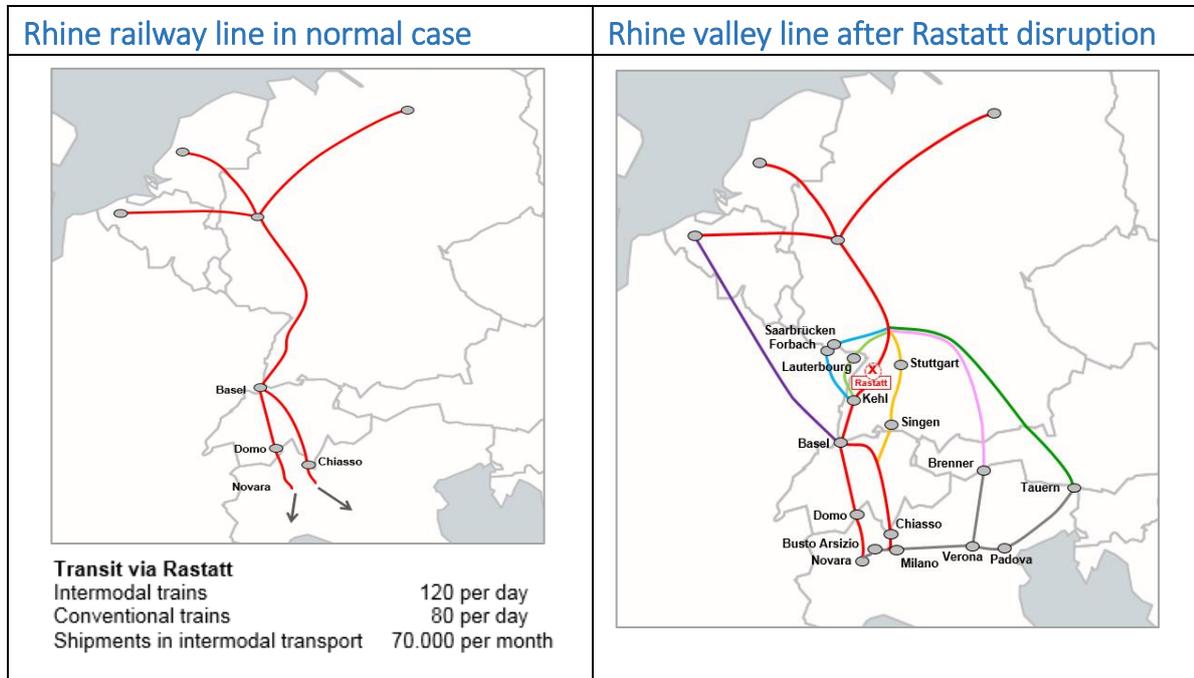
Dear Federal Minister Dobrindt,  
Dear EU Commissioner Bulc,

The Rhine valley railways will be interrupted for almost two months because of the Rastatt construction site accident. Once the route is reopened the announced date of 7 October 2017, railway logistics will have suffered **immense damage**.

**How is the situation today?**

- > For the 200 freight trains a day that usually run in the Rhine valley in September, there is in theory diversion capacity for 150 freight trains via Stuttgart-Singen, Brenner and Alsace according to the infrastructure managers.
- > The Rhine valley line is the main line for intermodal traffic in Europe. **Around 50% of the trade between Northern Europe and Italy via Switzerland** is normally performed by intermodal transport on this axis.
- > **At present, the freight railways can manage only 25% of the normal volumes on the re-routings via Germany, France and Austria.**
- > **Intermodal transport is particularly disadvantaged: the diversion volumes of this strongest market segment reach less than 15% of its habitual volume.**

- > **The lack of locomotive drivers** in the Brenner and Alsace region is the main reason why most of these capacities are not used even three weeks after the disruption.
- > Because of the difficult operational conditions of the diversions via Stuttgart-Singen, **the majority of the trains have to be cancelled** or run with extreme delays of several days.



### What are the consequences?

- > The European system of rail logistics is about to collapse.
- > The transshipment terminals of intermodal transport along the Rhine Alpine Corridor are congested with containers and are refusing to accept additional loading units.
- > Supply shortages and production stops have already occurred in large numbers of plants north and south of the Alps - **a very large number of production sites are about to come to a standstill.**
- > **Damages running into billions** arise for the economy, for industry, for the railways, operators and transport companies.
- > Part of the rail traffic will be lost to the road, and it will not be possible to win it back for years. **The EU modal shift aims are endangered.**
- > Decades of investments in the railway system will be damaged or destroyed.

### How could this happen?

The Rastatt disruption and the current crisis management is a perfect example of what is wrong with European rail freight transportation:

- > On important freight transport corridors, **there are not enough diversion routes** that are planned as stand-by and that can be readily used in case of traffic disruptions.
- > A transnational corridor perspective for infrastructure planning and management is still very basic.

- There is **no international coordination of construction sites** on the railway infrastructure. Alternative and diversion routes that are suitable for freight traffic were partially or completely closed during the construction of the risky tunnelling in Rastatt because of other construction works.
- **National railway particularities** make it difficult to divert to lines of other countries. German-speaking train drivers, for example, cannot be deployed on the diversion lines via France.
- There is no **structure for international crisis management** in rail freight transport. The much-needed day-to-day coordination between national infrastructure managers, railways, terminals and operators is extremely slow and inefficient.

### What must now happen in the short term?

It is still unclear for many railway experts to understand why the total closure of the line could not have been avoided or significantly shortened by the building of **a temporary, single track replacement line** immediately after the damage of the Rhine valley line due to construction works.

In order to avoid the blackout of the system and a permanent loss of trust of the market, the following measures are needed:

1. Establishment of a **task force** at ministerial and/or EU level with crisis competencies, including the infrastructure managers.
2. Support to the railway undertakings to perform **short-term reinforcement of the driver pool** on the diversion lines via Brenner, France, Stuttgart-Singen-Schaffhausen area by releases in favour of freight traffic: by this measure the diversion capacity can be increased from 20% today to 50-60% within 2-3 days.
3. **Simplified operating procedures** on the re-routing lines, with the coordination of ERA European Union Agency for Railways.
4. Examination of exceptional, temporary measures to **support the freight companies** that are directly affected by the Rastatt interruption and that face severe existential problems.
5. Implementation of a **special commission** for the short-term review of the largest and most serious freight traffic blockade in recent decades, including contingency plans, construction site planning, prioritisation of traffic etc. **Rastatt must never happen again!**

**Europe relies on the railways as the eco-friendly mode of transport of the future.** Hoping not to lose our chance of guaranteeing a competitive railway logistics, we rely on your full support.

We wish to thank all citizens who face changes in their normal rail services in favour of rail freight transportation. Together, we are committed to make rail logistics work also in this emergency situation.

Best regards

**The representatives of the European rail logistics**

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Julia Lamb Secretary General	European Rail Freight Association		
Nik Delmeire Secretary General	European Shippers' Council		
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