

OTIF



ORGANISATION INTERGOUVERNEMENTALE POUR
LES TRANSPORTS INTERNATIONAUX FERROVIAIRES

ZWISCHENSTAATLICHE ORGANISATION FÜR DEN
INTERNATIONALEN EISENBAHNVERKEHR

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION FOR INTER-
NATIONAL CARRIAGE BY RAIL

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ERA causes confusion on VKM register

Doubles are no longer excluded

The European Railway Agency (ERA) and the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) agreed in 2007 to create and maintain a joint register of Vehicle Keeper Markings (VKM). Since the end of April and without prior notice this agreement has been unilaterally violated by ERA.

Since July 2007 the VKM register has been updated on every first Wednesday of each month, based on a bilateral data exchange. ERA has been providing codifications of vehicle keepers within the EU Member States of OTIF as well as the relevant data from the COTIF zone and the Member States of the Organization for Cooperation of Railways (OSJD).

"In the interest of security and unlike ERA, which is ignoring the entries of non-EU Members States since the end of April 2010, OTIF still meets its obligations and will continue to publish the updated VKM register on its website (<http://www.otif.org/en/technology-registers.html>)", said Stefan Schimming, Secretary General of OTIF, on June 10, 2010 in Bern. The publishing date will though be delayed by one week, due to the lack of cooperation from ERA.

The main drawback of ERA having suspended all cooperation is, however, the fact that doubles can no longer be excluded by the acceptance procedure for VKMs. Especially in cases of accident, where fire fighters or rescue services would need access to codifications or in cases of necessary enquiries at operational level, this could cause serious problems as loss of time or safety deficits.

As, during the last weeks, high level OTIF experts have no longer been permitted to attend ERA working groups - some of them having though received an official invitation - the behaviour of ERA is - even if unexplained - rather conclusive.

Several vain attempts to receive an explanation at working level have prompted the Secretary General of OTIF to write to Mr. Ruete (Director General of DG Move) and to the Presidency and Members of the Administrative Board of ERA, which will hold its next session on Tuesday, 15th of June. In his letter he pointed out the above mentioned behaviour of ERA and asked for a quick solution, especially in cases where existing agreements are violated.

On behalf of a prosperous development of the railway sector, all sorts of traffic facilitation between EU- and non-EU Member States on the Eurasian continent will play a crucial part. OTIF contributes to this aim, will further intensify its contribution and feels though entitled and obliged to criticise all sorts of counterproductive measures.