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EPAL has been operating as a pallet organisation since 1995. 1,500 licensed member operations are organised within EPAL. In 2012 approx. 67 million EPAL-Europallets were produced under the licence and quality assurance terms of EPAL. Around 450 million EPAL-Europallets are presently in exchange. Within the framework of its activity as an international pallet organisation to date, EPAL has achieved the proliferation of the production and repair volumes of EPAL-Europallets and -boxpallets, and in this way has made a fundamental contribution to the success of the globally unique open pallet exchange pool.

The exchange of EPAL-Europallets and -boxpallets organised by EPAL is experiencing further increased significance both nationally and internationally, due constant and independent quality assurance as well as logistical and ecological advantages in comparison to other cargo carrier systems. Due to the tight network of EPAL licence holders and the constant contact between EPAL, its member associations in 14 European countries and the users of EPAL-Europallets and -boxpallets, support to the users within the framework of procurement, the exchange and repair of EPAL-Europallets and -boxpallets is guaranteed at all times.

In order to further improve the EPAL-Europalletpool, in 2012 EPAL decided to re-award the independent quality controlling assignment within the framework of a multi-stage international tender process.

For unknown reasons EPAL's former cooperation partner, the international railways association (UIC) or rather the UIC working group "Questions of palletisation" rejected the controlling assignment tender as well as its re-awarding on the basis of the evaluation of the tender and demanded from EPAL to continue to have inspections carried out by the previous contractual partner, despite considerably worse conditions. As there have not been any qualitative or any other concrete factual reasons, EPAL refused the demand of the UIC working group – also for reasons of strict compliance.

The independent quality controlling commissioned by EPAL will be carried out in the future by the internationally renowned audit organisation Bureau Veritas.

In answer to this decision taken by EPAL, the UIC working group has now decided to terminate the many years of cooperation with EPAL. EPAL sincerely regrets this decision by the UIC working group.

However, the UIC working group's decision is irrelevant to the further activities of EPAL in its organisation of the free EPAL-Europalletpool, and in particular with respect to the suitability for exchange of the EPAL-Europallets and -boxpallets produced in the past and indeed in the future under the EPAL licence.

It remains possible to exchange pallets and boxpallets that have already been produced with the EPAL/oval and EUR/oval marks without restriction. And this also applies specifically to exchanges with pallets and boxpallets that are set to be produced in the future with the EPAL/oval mark.

With regards to the continued use of the EUR/oval mark, EPAL is presently in contractual negotiations with DB Intermodal Services GmbH as the organisation responsible for pallet business on behalf of Deutsche Bahn AG. The organisation has condemned the actions of the UIC working group and distanced itself from the group's decisions. Furthermore, DB Intermodal Services GmbH has expressed an unlimited desire to continue with the contractual discussions with EPAL, which are presently at an advanced stage.

In light of the fact that the large majority of the remaining European railway associations organised within the UIC working group, and likewise the UIC working group and the EPP itself, have not been particularly active in the promotion of the European pallet pool in recent years, the UIC working group's decision will not have any effect on the operative business of EPAL.

In the future EPAL, together with its international member associations and the approx. 1,500 licence holders worldwide will bear sole responsibility - as in the past - for the provision of support to the users of EPAL-Europallets and -boxpallets within the framework of transport and storage logistics, as well as for the organisation of the exchange pool.

As a result of the decision made by the UIC working group, EPAL is in a position to focus even more strongly on aligning itself with the fundamental participants in the pallet pool - the shippers and recipients of goods, the hauliers and companies in the storage logistics sector - within the framework of further development of the products and the EPAL-Europalletpool. In contrast to the situation at the time of the exchange pool's establishment, the use of EPAL-Europallets and -boxpallets within the framework of rail transit is no longer the sole focus of pallet management.

EPAL notes that the UIC working group has named two other companies as pallet organisations. Neither company owns any rights to the awarding of licences for the EPAL/oval mark.

It is surprising that the UIC working group, as a representative of public railway companies, has undertaken to commission other organisations without a public tender and in particular without the prior exchange of information with EPAL or any other market participants, and in doing so has ignored the results of the tender carried out by EPAL.

It remains to be seen whether the decisions of the UIC working group are legally effective.

If the decisions of the UIC working group do stand then EPAL shall be carefully observing the further development of the other organisations and deciding, on this basis, whether the pallets and boxpallets licensed by the other organisations are suitable for exchange within the EPAL-Europalletpool.

In every event, EPAL shall remain the world's leading pallet organisation in the field of open pallet exchange as a result of its many years of experience and the large volume of EPAL-Europallets and -boxpallets produced, repaired and exchanged under the licence and quality assurance of EPAL.