Press release

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Railways reiterate need for stable funding in next EU budget

As the European Council considers possible cuts to funds in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) is urging policymakers to maintain the strongest possible ambition for rail investment. The Connecting Europe Facility, the EU's main programme for transport infrastructure, is a cornerstone for developing rail and wider mobility projects. The sector had hoped to see its budget rise to €100 billion in the next MFF to meet urgent investment needs at a moment when rail is increasingly important for Europe's competitiveness, decarbonisation, defence and energy security.

An MFF negotiating box expected at this week's European Council meeting points to a reduction in the overall EU budget compared with the Commission proposal, including cuts to the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). CER is among the 45 European transport organisations that have been urging decision makers to increase the fund (currently allocating just over €50 billion to transport) to at least €100 billion and is concerned that reducing it will undermine one of the EU's most effective instruments for financing cross-border infrastructure, removing bottlenecks and completing the trans-European transport network (TEN-T).

CEF has a proven European added value. It supports projects that individual Member States cannot deliver alone, in particular cross-border rail links, missing links, interoperability upgrades and military mobility-relevant infrastructure. These investments are not optional: they are essential for a more integrated Single Market, for resilient supply chains, for affordable mobility and for shifting more passengers and freight to low-emission transport.

CER therefore calls on Member States to safeguard CEF in the MFF negotiations and to ensure that the rail-related components of the transport envelope remain commensurate with Europe's ambitions.

CER also stresses the need for a coherent approach across the new EU budget architecture. National and Regional Partnership Plans must support rail and public transport investments that are aligned with TEN-T, climate and competitiveness objectives. Likewise, the European Competitiveness Fund should complement, not replace, dedicated infrastructure funding by supporting industrial capacity, clean technologies and innovation that reinforce the rail value chain.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"Europe cannot build competitiveness, resilience and decarbonisation on underfunded infrastructure. CEF is one of the EU budget's clearest tools for delivering European added value. A strong CEF will accelerate cross-border connectivity, strengthen the Single Market and make Europe's climate and energy goals easier to reach."*

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About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together railway undertakings, their national associations

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as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The diverse and comprehensive membership made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, covers the large majority of the rail infrastructure network, rail freight business and rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policy makers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a resilient, competitive, and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on social media.