The next CEF must be strong enough to drive EU transport infrastructure funding and enhance EU competitiveness and security

*** Original version: 7 October 2025 / Corrigendum: 12 November 2025

The ten signatory associations representing Europe's railway sector – including passenger and freight transport operators, infrastructure and terminal managers, rolling stock lessors and rail equipment suppliers – welcome the proposal of the European Commission for the continuation of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) as part of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034, published on 16 July 2025.

Supported by Commissioner for Transport and Sustainable Tourism Apostolos Tzitzikostas as of the start of his mandate, the future of this program has been ensured, confirming the continuation of the dedicated support to the deployment of a resilient, interoperable Trans-European Transport Network. The rail sector will work in the coming months to promote the Commission proposal and strengthen its firepower.

The Strategic Imperative

Rail transport infrastructure and operations form the backbone of European civil and military connectivity. It enables the Single Market to serve citizens and economic actors effectively by linking regions and cities, while providing critical services to military forces by moving military personnel and equipment safely, securely and efficiently across European countries. An advanced, interoperable and resilient transport infrastructure network –as described in the TEN- T Regulation– is therefore fundamental to the European Union's security and economic competitiveness.

While significant progress has been made toward establishing a Single European Railway Area over recent decades, critical bottlenecks persist throughout the TEN-T core, extended core, and comprehensive networks. These constraints are particularly acute at international connection, where seamless connectivity remains challenging, as well as at urban nodes and in multimodal hubs, where goods and passengers should be switching modes seamlessly. Resolving these bottlenecks is essential for delivering enhanced rail transport services for passengers and freight customers, as well as catering to military mobility needs.

Under the Commission's proposal, the future CEF will finance infrastructure projects with a strong international dimension and dual-use military mobility projects. CEF will also support projects of common interest that contribute to the development of a smart, sustainable and resilient European transport network.

Our Position

The rail sector welcomes the positive signal that the European Commission has sent with its proposal. The signatories commend this strategic approach and stress the fundamental importance to ensure sufficient funding for the deployment of European-wide interoperable systems including ERTMS, as well as the development of an efficient and sustainable European rail network, notably high-speed and the related ancillary network, including through resilient and efficient multimodal hubs. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that EU citizens and all stakeholders also see the benefit of defence-related investments in their daily mobility options.

The signatory associations AERRL, ALLRAIL, CER, CT4EU, EIM, ERFA, UIP, UITP, UIRR, UNIFE call on Member State's governments and Members of European Parliament to provide unwavering support for the CEF Transport programme, maintaining its level of ambition, and to act in order to increase its firepower for the timely completion of the TEN-T network.