

CER General Assembly endorses new set of policy priorities

On 21 February, the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) held its bi-annual General Assembly in Brussels. On the agenda was the association's policy agenda for the years 2019-2024, which was unanimously endorsed by the participating CEO's. The rail sector plays an important role in the EU economy, with 2.3 million EU citizens directly and indirectly employed and a Gross Value Added (GVA) of 149 billion euros. That's also why CER decided to inaugurate the upcoming legislature with a clear policy agenda, containing both sectoral self-commitments as well as requests for ever better accompanying policies.

Our 5 commitments:

- Continue the digital transformation of our processes and services;
- Stressing our customer orientation;
- Offer carbon-free rail operations in Europe by 2050;
- Engage in a deeper reflection on possible sources of funding beyond the still necessary public ones;
- Look beyond continental traffic, and aim to further strengthened Eurasian transport operations by implementing high-frequency rail connections between Europe and Asia.

The policies needed

At the same time, consistent action is requested from the institutional stakeholders. The document presents the European railway sector recommendations for policies:

- that must foster the role of rail as the backbone of a sustainable European transport and economy;
- that ensures a stable regulatory environment in the rail sector;
- that must redress current regulatory unbalances between transport modes.

Further policy measures are needed in order to disclose rail's true potential:

- measures to promote digitalisation, research and innovation,
- adequate funding for technological upgrades of infrastructure and rolling stock,
- a complete internalization of negative externalities for all modes of transport,
- measures to catch the opportunities offered by trans-continental freight flows,
- measures to redress the intermodal playing field under the fiscal aspect, and
- the aspect of consumer protection and of working conditions.

CER Chair Crister Fritzson said: *"What is achieved during the next five years in terms of EU policy and related actions will be crucial for our ability to break the negative trend of climate change. The railway sector is prepared to make the necessary commitments, but we clearly need help also from policy and decision makers in getting the right framework conditions and incentives in place for the transportation sector as a whole. We think that our agenda should really be the reference baseline in this regard, hoping*

that it is sufficient, but of course we welcome more ambitious efforts. We look forward to an open and constructive dialogue.”

CER Executive Director Libor Lochman said: *“We are proud of this agenda, which sets firm sector commitments and sets out the political framework we need. Together with the European institutions we have done a lot, but any reflection on the next EU policy agenda has to consider the impact of new available technologies, the needs of our citizens and, together, the fact that we cannot give up in the fight against climate change. Rail can be the EU’s silver bullet when it comes to greening mobility.”*

It will be on the basis of this policy agenda that CER will engage with all Commissioners and all Members of the European Parliament that will take office during 2019.

The document is available for download on the [CER website](#).

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About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 71% of the rail network length, 76% of the rail freight business and about 92% of 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 competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow [@CER_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) on Twitter.