

Press release

Brussels, 6 October 2021



Youth & Rail – a sustainable friendship

Today, 6 October, the [Connecting Europe Express](#) (CEE) will travel to Strasbourg on the penultimate day of its exciting 6-week journey. The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and their French member, SNCF, will take this opportunity to host an event, with Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the organisation [Erasmus by Train](#), dedicated to the topic of Youth, Rail and Sustainability.

The concepts of European youth, rail and European identity have been intertwined since the creation of the Interrail pass and projects such as [DiscoverEU](#) and [Erasmus+](#), which confirm that the construction of a strong European identity is only possible with the involvement of European youth. European students and our young workforce must be provided with the possibility to meet and travel under affordable, sustainable conditions. The unique contribution of European railways is at the very heart of this and CER and its members are working hard to make the European Green Deal a reality. Rail transport is already Green Deal compliant as it is responsible for just 0,4% of transport-caused CO2 emissions, while having a share of 8% of passenger transport and 19% of freight transport across Europe. The Fit for 55 Regulatory package is the opportunity to organise an effective modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport such as rail by internalising transport externalities more efficiently.

Today, CER and SNCF will bring together local, national and European stakeholders with youth representatives central to discussions on the way forward for the relationship between youth and rail to thrive. Speakers at the event involving student-led initiative Erasmus by Train will include European Parliament Vice-President Othmar Karas, Walter Goetz, Head of Cabinet of Transport Commissioner Adina Vălean, President of the Grand-Est Region Jean Rottner, Mayor of Strasbourg Jeanne Barseghian, as well as hosts Jean-Pierre Farandou, President of SNCF, and Alberto Mazzola, CER Executive Director.

The Erasmus by Train initiative will notably present its ideas for a more sustainable future. According to **Jonathan Hassel, Co-Initiator of Erasmus by Train** and speaker at today's event: *"Rail has the potential to become the Europe-connecting means of transport of our generation, but reform and political will is needed!"*

The Discover EU programme, which offers young Europeans free rail tickets, has already been a major success and provided around 70 000 youngsters with the possibility to travel across Europe and reinforce their European identity by discovering different cultures and traditions. It is worth underlining that another round of [applications](#) will take place between Tuesday 12 October 2021 and Tuesday 26 October 2021.

SNCF President Jean-Pierre Farandou stated: *"As a rail transport operator carrying out public service missions and ensuring citizens' freedom of movement, SNCF has a special commitment towards this generation that is more aware of its environmental footprint. That is why my ambition is to double the modal share of rail in France within 10 years so that the youngest generation can better benefit from a sustainable and affordable mode of transport".*

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola stated: *“While the journey of the Connecting Europe Express may be coming to an end, the true and sustainable friendship between youth and rail will continue and flourish with a smarter, clean and more connected EU railway. We endorse and look forward to the European Year of Rail being followed, most appropriately, by the European Year of Youth. On this same occasion I would also like to thank the European Commission, CER members and all partners who took part in the successful #EUYearofRail project: the Connecting Europe Express”.*

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About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together around 70 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 73% 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 policymakers 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 us on Twitter [@CER_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cer).

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About SNCF

SNCF is a global leader in passenger and freight transport services, including management of the French rail network, with revenue of €35 billion (pre-pandemic), of which one-third on international markets. The Group does business in 120 countries and has 272,000 employees, with 210,000 in France and over half in its core rail business. The new SNCF, a public limited company that began operating on 1 January 2020, consists of a parent (SNCF) and five subsidiaries: SNCF Réseau (management, operation and maintenance of the French rail network, plus railway engineering) with its own subsidiary SNCF Gares & Connexions (station management and development); SNCF Voyageurs (Transilien (mass transit in the Paris region), TER (regional rail) and Intercités (long-distance rail), TGV INOUI, OUIGO, Eurostar, Thalys, Aléo and Lyria (international rail), and OUI.sncf (online ticket sales)); Keolis (a global operator of urban, suburban and regional mass transit systems); Rail Logistics Europe (rail freight); and Geodis (freight transport and logistics solutions). SNCF Group works closely with its customers—passengers, local authorities, shippers and railway operators using SNCF Réseau services—and with regional communities, building on its expertise in all aspects of rail and all types of transport to deliver simple, seamless, sustainable solutions for every mobility need. Learn more at sncf.com