

## Rail Sector calls on Transport Ministers to develop sustainable, future-oriented EU transport policy

Speaking at the EU Informal Transport Council on 20 September in Budapest, Dr Alberto Mazzola, Executive Director of the Community of European Railway & Infrastructure Companies (CER), flagged the actions needed for developing competitive, sustainable, future-oriented EU transport policy. He particularly emphasised the need for a European high-speed rail (HSR) master plan which would connect all European capitals and major cities by 2050, granting over 60% of EU citizens access to high-speed rail and bringing €750 billion in societal benefits. The importance of this has been recognised by European Commission President von der Leyen, who has included it as a priority for Commissioner-designate for Sustainable Transport & Tourism Apostolos Tzitzikostas.

Dr Mazzola referenced China as an example of a high-speed success story. China has the world's largest and most extensively used HSR network (45,000 km), with studies estimating the net benefit to the Chinese economy at around \$378 billion and with an annual return on investment of 6.5%. It has also helped to substantially reduce Chinese dependence on oil and imports, an example Europe can learn from.

Such a comprehensive network in Europe would mean at least tripling the existing HSR network and require investment costs estimated at €550 billion, which would create net positive benefits to society in the range of €750 billion by 2070 according to a [recent European study](#). Furthermore, an estimated 1.5 billion jobs would be created and 5 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions saved.

Furthermore, Dr Mazzola underlined to Ministers that adequate financing is at the core of a well-functioning rail system, yet railway infrastructure is still underfunded in most Member States. Only through the provision of fair, long-term, comprehensive financing can the EU address all evident bottlenecks that prevent the rail market from reaching its potential as the true backbone of sustainable transport.

While the rail system is committed to maximising the current infrastructure through innovation and digitalisation – with ERTMS and Digital Automatic Coupling playing a key role – there is nonetheless a need to invest in infrastructure and incorporate rail freight into the main policy areas of the EU, including those on climate change and military mobility. Likewise, there is a need to scale-up the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and to explore new ways to attract private investments, applying the polluter-pays principle and earmarking revenues to the greenest modes, amongst other measures.

**CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola** said: “High-speed rail is key to the provision of quality and comfortable rail services, the reduction of oil dependency and decarbonisation. With a HSR network connecting all EU capitals and major cities, rail market share on long-distance traffic will increase above 50% and bring about true and lasting modal shift. More than 100 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> could be saved per year thanks

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*to shifting traffic to HSR from 2025 to 2070; this would have a value of €10 billion/year suitable to finance a very ambitious HSR network of 31,849 km”.*

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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](http://www.cer.be) or follow us on Twitter [@CER\\_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cer).