

European Rail CEOs join high-level Dialogue on continent-wide high-speed rail implementation

Today, three senior leaders and the Executive Director from the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) participated in the European Commission's Implementation Dialogue on High-Speed Rail, hosted by the Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, Apostolos Tzitzikostas. Representing Europe's major railway operators, Gianpiero Strisciuglio, CEO of Trenitalia, Alain Krakovitch, Director of SNCF TGV Intercités, Anja Schöllmann, Member of the Board of DB Fernverkehr AG, and Alberto Mazzola, Executive Director of CER, joined the discussion to offer their expertise and support the rollout of a comprehensive and competitive European high-speed rail network.

European travellers increasingly want to travel by high-speed rail (HSR) because it offers a fast, comfortable, and sustainable way to reach their destination—whether for work, family, or leisure. HSR has proven to be inclusive and accessible, encouraging shifts from road and air to rail. It also relieves capacity on conventional lines, freeing space for freight, regional, and commuter services. When integrated with local and regional networks, HSR boosts overall public transport use and strengthens economic and social cohesion. With a well-connected HSR system, rail could capture up to 54% of the long-distance travel market by 2070, with positive spillovers benefiting conventional long-distance rail services as well.

CER members are actively contributing to the dialogue by sharing operational experience and insights on the steps needed to turn Europe's high-speed rail ambitions into reality. To deliver this vision, CER members are calling for coordinated European action in several key areas starting with the construction of a real European High-Speed Network connecting capitals and major cities with speeds above 250 km/h for new lines and above 200 km/h for upgraded lines. These include accelerating cross-border interoperability (e.g. with standardised ERTMS deployment), making ticketing seamless (e.g. with the Open Sales and Distribution Model (OSDM)), creating a level playing field (e.g. with VAT and energy taxes), and keeping costs reasonable. Crucially, the network's success depends on a sustainable funding strategy combining public investment with private financing tools such as Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and Regulatory Asset-based (RAB) models. Stable regulation, predictable revenue, and strong public-private cooperation are vital to closing funding gaps and building a resilient, accessible, and competitive high-speed rail network across Europe.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"High-speed railway networks enhance efficiency and represent significant strides towards sustainable mobility. They enable railway operators to provide superior services and offer more attractive choices for passengers. With the right political decisions, CER members are confident they will provide commercially viable services to all continental EU capitals and major cities. As highlighted in Enrico Letta's report 'Much more than a market', a European high-speed rail network can significantly enhance the EU's competitiveness."*

CEO of Trenitalia Gianpiero Strisciuglio said: *"For high-speed rail to truly compete with short-haul and long-distance flights, we need a seamless and user-friendly ticketing experience. Integrating the Open Sales and Distribution Model (OSDM) into EU interoperability standards is a key step to simplify ticket distribution, lower costs, and make international rail travel more accessible to vendors and easier for passenger mobility in Europe."*

Director of SNCF TGV Intercités Alain Krakovitch said: *"SNCF fully supports the High-Speed Masterplan and the connexion of major European cities. To carry out this masterplan, the rail sector needs a level playing field with other modes of transport through policy measures like exemption of VAT for international journeys (as in the air sector), taxation on kerosene and taxation of negative externalities."*

Member of the Board of DB Fernverkehr AG Anja Schöllmann said: *"To make the European High-Speed Master Plan a reality, we must ensure interoperability for new high-speed lines — this means accelerating certification through the European Union Agency for Railways, harmonising train path allocations and improving rolling stock compatibility through widespread ERTMS deployment."*

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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 78% of the rail network length, 81% of the rail freight business and about 94% 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).