

Connecting Europe at High-Speed: Cities and Railways unite for a European high-speed rail network

Eurocities and the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) together hosted the high-level event “Connecting Europe at High-Speed”, under the patronage of European Parliament Vice-President Antonella Sberna (ECR), and in cooperation with Vice-Presidents Ewa Kopacz (EPP), Pina Picierno (S&D), and Nicolae Ștefănuță (Greens/EFA). The event brought together Members of the European Parliament, European Commission officials, mayors, and railway executives to discuss how to deliver a truly European high-speed rail network connecting cities and regions across the continent.

The European Commission, on 5 November, unveiled its master plan for a pan-European high-speed rail (HSR) network. At the event, CER and Eurocities welcomed the ambitious initiative with a joint declaration of support presented to the European Parliament Vice-Presidents and the European Commission, outlining the organisations’ shared recommendations for accelerating the deployment of high-speed rail as a cornerstone of Europe’s sustainable mobility future. With a joined-up HSR network, modern and comfortable high-speed trains have the potential to attract over half of long-distance travellers in the future.

The CER-Eurocities Joint Declaration praises the EU’s commitment to tripling high-speed rail traffic by 2050 and highlights the transformative potential of HSR to drive sustainable growth, cohesion, and climate progress. It calls for:

- A viable and coherent European HSR network, completing the corridors identified in the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) and connecting all EU capitals and major cities.
- Long-term, sustainable funding, combining EU, national, and private investment to meet the estimated €546 billion needed by 2050.
- Seamless and passenger-friendly ticketing, integrating long-distance and local mobility.
- A level playing field with other transport modes, through fair taxation and monitoring of cross-border connectivity.

Apostolos Tzitzikostas, European Commissioner for Transport and Sustainable Tourism, **Vincenzo Matano**, Head of Cabinet of Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms Raffaele Fitto, and **Kristian Schmidt**, Director for Land Transport, were present from the European Commission to highlight the key aspects of the new HSR action plan. Speakers exchanged insights on how to make Europe’s ambitions a reality, debating the operational and financing aspects of delivering the European high-speed rail network — from planning and securing predictable and sustainable funding mechanisms to construction.

Cities were represented by **Hanna Zdanowska**, Mayor of Łódź, Member of the European Committee of the Regions, and **Dávid Vitézy**, Chair of the Committee for Transport, Climate Action and Urban Development, Budapest City Assembly. **Luigi CORRADI**, CEO of FS International, and **Marco Kampp**, Director for international long-distance passenger transport at DB Fernverkehr and **Alberto Mazzola**, CER Executive Director, spoke on behalf of railways. **André Rodenbeck**, CEO Rolling Stock, Siemens Mobility, and **Gustavo Martínez**, Commercial Director at Ferrovial Construction and EIC President, rounded out the panel discussion, moderated by **Thomas Lymes**, Policy Director at Eurocities.

Enrico Letta, President of the Jacques Delors Institute and an early high-speed rail supporter in his report 'Much more than a Market', called on all to now fight and push for the successful implementation of the new framework to finally connect the different corners of the EU by high-speed rail. Several Members of the European Parliament also shared their views, including **Massimiliano Salini**, **Dariusz Jonski**, **Carlo Ciccio**li and **Arash Saeidi**.

The discussion highlighted the need for coordinated action between EU institutions, Member States, financing institutions, train builders, railway constructors, cities, and rail companies to accelerate project delivery, ensure harmonisation, and maintain affordability for passengers. Speakers also underlined the importance of integrating high-speed services and local mobility systems within urban nodes to create truly seamless, door-to-door connections. By aligning investment, innovation, and governance, participants agreed that Europe's cities must remain at the core of the HSR transformation, serving as both gateways and beneficiaries of enhanced European connectivity.

Without a strong foundation of support, even the best of plans can falter. This is why the CER-Eurocities Declaration is now open to the individual signature of rail CEOs and city mayors across Europe. Many have already provided their early endorsement, including, among others, CER Chair and CEO of Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) Andreas Matthä, and incoming CER Chair and CEO of Polish State Railways (PKP) Alan Beroud, as well as mayors and deputy mayors from Łódź, Budapest, Amsterdam, The Hague, Mannheim, Brescia, and Netwerkstad Twente.

Additional signatures will be gathered till the end of the year.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"High-speed rail is not only about faster travel — it is about a more connected, competitive, and sustainable Europe. By linking cities and regions through a coherent European network, we bring people closer to opportunities, give a strong boost to the European economy and contribute to energy independence. To make this vision a reality, Europe needs stable long-term investment, fair competition with other modes, and rolling stock compatibility through widespread deployment of harmonised technical enablers such as the European Rail Traffic Management System."*

Eurocities Secretary General André Sobczak said: *"Europe needs a fast, high-quality rail network that connects every major city and urban centre. Rail is essential for achieving climate neutrality, economic growth and territorial cohesion. Cities are ready to play their part, integrating long-distance rail into local mobility systems and shaping the multimodal hubs of the future. We call on EU institutions to prioritise investment, fair competition and city involvement to make rail a defining force of Europe's green transition."*

Mayor of Łódź Hanna Zdanowska said: *"Construction of the coherent high-speed railway system in Europe will finally erase the difference between the 'old' and the 'new' Europe. Łódź is a million-inhabitant metropolis, in which our citizens, thanks to completing the HSR system, will be able to reach Prague, Berlin, Vilnius, and Lviv within a 3-hour journey. New, CO2-neutral travelling opportunities will reshape the quality of life, give new incentives for the economy and ease the research and science development and provide inhabitants of Poland with evidence of a truly integrated Europe."*

Chair of the Committee for Transport, Climate Action and Urban Development, Budapest City Assembly, Dávid Vitézy said: *"For Europe's high-speed rail network to succeed, our urban nodes must be ready to connect. In our cities throughout Europe, we're investing in modernising stations, expanding capacity, and integrating long-distance rail with local mobility. But cities cannot do this alone. We join Eurocities in calling for continued and stronger EU and national investment in urban nodes. Policymakers should ensure mechanisms, through CEF of national and regional plans, that ensure proper support for cities in this grand European effort to link our continent sustainably."*

FS International CEO Luigi Corradi said: *"The future of High Speed Rail in Europe - emphasized Luigi Corradi, Chief Executive Officer of FS International - will increasingly be driven by growing competition, which helps improve service quality, reduce costs and boost demand, placing the passenger at the heart of strategic decisions. The development and simplification of cross-border connections — together with the proposal to build additional High Speed rail lines in Central and Eastern Europe, as suggested by the EU High Speed Rail Plan presented today — will significantly contribute to the growth of rail transport, promoting a comfortable, safe and sustainable way to travel."*

Director of international long-distance passenger transport at DB Fernverkehr Marco Kampp said: *"A Metropolitan Network connecting 250 million EU citizens can be realised with the High-Speed Rail Network Plan as a starting point for concrete actions regarding infrastructure, interoperability, and an intermodal level playing field."*

The CER-Eurocities Declaration on Connecting Europe at High Speed and current signatory list is accessible [here](#).

Contact person

Laura Henry
CER Head of Communications
E: laura.henry@cer.be
+32 491 16 21 73

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).

Contact person

Thomas Lymes
Eurocities Policy Director
thomas.lymes@eurocities.eu

About Eurocities

Eurocities is the largest network of European cities. We count over 200 large cities among our membership, representing more than 150 million people across 38 countries, from within and outside the European Union. We strive for a Europe where cities are at the heart

Press release

Brussels, 05 November 2025



+32 2 552 08 93

of European, national and regional decision-making to create a sustainable and inclusive future for all. For more information, visit www.eurocities.eu or follow us on [LinkedIn](#).