

Press release

Brussels, 20 January 2026



Missing the deadline is not an option: CER calls for simplification and acceleration of permitting procedures for rail infrastructure projects

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) welcomes the European Court of Auditors' updated report on transport megaprojects, published as a follow-up to its 2020 Special Report. The report highlights serious concerns regarding delays in the implementation of several transport infrastructure projects along the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T), as well as escalating costs caused by unforeseen crises and geopolitical challenges. These concerns have led the EU auditors to change their assessment of the 2030 goal for the completion of the core TEN-T from "unlikely to be met" five years ago to "will not be met".

One of the key causes in infrastructure project delays is the complexity of permitting procedures. Multiple, lengthy authorisation processes continue to jeopardise implementation timelines, endanger the binding targets of the TEN-T Regulation, and significantly increase costs. Completing the TEN-T Network is essential for the railway sector to deliver a seamless, efficient, green, and dual-use multimodal mobility system, strengthen infrastructure resilience, and ensure interoperable cross-border connections.

Missing the 2030 deadline is not an option. In 2021 the EU adopted the 'Smart TEN-T' Directive, designed to streamline administrative procedures so that key TEN-T projects – especially cross-border links and missing links – can be completed faster and more efficiently. CER urges the European Commission to go even further to simplify and accelerate permitting procedures for rail infrastructure projects and is working to provide concrete rail sector proposals for the upcoming review of the Streamlining Directive.

The Court of Auditors' report also notes that the Commission has opened infringement procedures against five Member States for failures related to the transposition of the Directive. CER calls on these Member States to urgently transpose the Directive into national law to prevent further delays to infrastructure projects.

Given the high and rising costs of rail infrastructure, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) beyond 2027 must be raised to match the upcoming challenges and to deliver on the EU's sustainability and resilience objectives. The railway sector has been calling for €100 billion in CEF funding and urges the co-legislators to significantly raise the current level of ambition.

Strengthened governance, including for the roll-out of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), will also help put a stop to the delays of TEN-T megaprojects. A dedicated programme manager under the responsibility of the European Commission should be created to oversee the deployment of ERTMS across

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Europe and ensure coordination of national and cross-border projects, efficiency, stability and compatibility of ERTMS versions, and timely delivery.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"The European Court of Auditors' report on EU transport infrastructure must be a wake-up call for urgent action by the co-legislators. We can no longer afford to jeopardise TEN-T completion targets. Simple and efficient permit-granting procedures, with accelerated timelines – particularly for cross-border projects – are essential to deliver the joined up transport network Europe needs."*

The European Court of Auditors' full report is accessible [here](#).

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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 [LinkedIn](#), [Bluesky](#) or X [@CER_railways](#).