

Press release

Brussels, 20 April 2026



Railways' key role in fighting transport poverty through access to essential services

Ahead of Europe's first Anti-Poverty Strategy, expected in May, the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) is calling for strong and sustained investment in essential services like rail. As the Commission develops this new framework, transport poverty is emerging as a major challenge that must be addressed to ensure fair access to opportunities and essential services across Europe.

Transport poverty arises when people lack adequate or affordable transport options, limiting their ability to reach work, education, healthcare and other essential activities. It jeopardises what the Letta Report on the EU Single Market describes as the "freedom to stay" in one's region, a principle that is increasingly recognised as critical for the functioning and fairness of the internal market.

Amid the latest energy crisis, concerns are growing that transport poverty may deepen unless decisive action is taken. While a Social Climate Fund will provide important support to EU Member States, additional measures will be needed to ensure that mobility remains accessible for all.

Rail is a central part of the solution. Railways offer inclusive, reliable and energy-efficient mobility, helping reduce dependence on private car use and easing the burden of rising fuel costs on low-income and car-less households. Strengthening both regional rail services and long-distance connections is essential: local and regional lines enable citizens to remain and thrive in their home territories, while new plans for a European high-speed rail network will integrate regions into the wider European economy.

To support the success of the forthcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, CER calls for:

- A dual-level approach that improves accessibility at local and regional level while reinforcing strategic European connections.
- Targeted use of Social Climate Fund resources to prioritise the most energy-efficient and socially beneficial transport modes.
- Complementary use of revenues from the wider Emission Trading System (ETS) to invest in sustainable mobility, following examples like Ireland, which dedicated nearly 75% of its ETS auction revenues in 2024 to public transport, including rail.
- Robust and predictable EU funding for transport in the next Multiannual Financial Framework, including a Connecting Europe Facility of at least €100 billion and ring-fenced support for rail within other EU funding instruments, in particular €20 billion allocated to transport in the National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPP).

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"Transport poverty is not only a mobility issue, it is a barrier to social participation and economic opportunity. Rail provides an affordable, sustainable and inclusive solution that can make a real difference*

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for households across Europe. The EU Anti-Poverty Strategy must recognise this and ensure strong, long-term support for rail at local and regional level while reinforcing strategic European connections.”

On Wednesday 22 April, the European Parliament Intergroup on Services of General Interest (SGI) and the Social Economy is hosting an event with the association SGI Europe to discuss the forthcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy. The event will be opened by MEP Benedetta Scuderi, Vice-Chair of the Intergroup, and will feature keynote contributions from MEP João Oliveira, rapporteur for the Parliament’s own-initiative report on developing a new anti-poverty strategy. CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola will participate in the panel discussion, moderated by MEP Marie Toussaint, Co-Chair of the Intergroup on Fighting against Poverty.

Registration for this timely discussion remains open until Monday 20 April 2026 [here](#).

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About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The diverse and comprehensive membership made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, covers the large majority of the rail infrastructure network, rail freight business and rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policy makers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a resilient, competitive, and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on social media.