Press release

Rheingau,

19 November 2026

European rail CEOs urge collective action to deliver Europe's passenger rail ambitions

European passenger rail CEOs have called for workable EU rules, stronger cross-border coordination and sustained investment to turn Europe's rail ambitions into better services for passengers. Meeting in Rheingau, Germany, at their annual High-Level Passenger Meeting, jointly organised by the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and the International Union of Railways (UIC) and hosted by Deutsche Bahn, rail leaders discussed the European Commission's Passenger Package, High-Speed Rail Action Plan and the future role of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA). The right policy choices in these areas will help railways develop and operate better cross-border connections, translating European vision into tangible improvements for passengers.

The European Commission's Passenger Package and High-Speed Rail Action Plan promise easier international journeys, stronger passenger protection and faster connections between European cities. While Railway CEOs share the general objective, they stress that achieving these benefits requires rules that work in practice while reflecting the operational realities of international rail services.

On the Passenger Package, rail CEOs advocate a balanced approach to multi-operator journeys. Ensuring passengers can reach their destination when connections are disrupted is achievable without introducing disproportionate liabilities that could drive up costs and ultimately make rail travel less affordable. Passenger CEOs reaffirm their commitment to making cross-border journeys easier to plan and book through the CER Ticketing Roadmap. Its industry-led solutions, including the Open Sales and Distribution Model (OSDM) and the CIT Agreement on Journey Continuation (AJC), are already improving international ticketing and passenger assistance and railway companies will continue their implementation. The sector is also deeply involved in the development of the multimodal standards planned in the last EU technical specifications (Telematics TSI), cooperating within the current works of ERA and standardisation body CEN to preserve existing solutions and create new open solutions based on fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory terms.

Stronger European coordination between Member States and EU institutions will be critical to delivering Europe's high-speed rail network. Faster, more frequent rail services between better-connected European capitals, cities and regions, require action to remove infrastructure bottlenecks and improve connections between national networks. Closer cooperation is also vital to speed up the deployment of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), and ensure sufficient, well-coordinated infrastructure capacity for international services.

The ongoing revision of the rules governing the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) offers the opportunity to streamline key procedures for cross-border rail operations. A targeted revision of the ERA Regulation, keeping ERA's focus on its core safety and interoperability responsibilities, is needed to make vehicle authorisation, safety certification and technical procedures faster, more predictable and less burdensome. This will help trains enter service more quickly and operate more easily across borders. Any additional tasks must be supported by adequate resources.

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Delivering Europe's rail ambitions ultimately requires sustained investment. Passenger rail CEOs call for predictable, long-term European and national funding, particularly through the next Multiannual Financial Framework and the Connecting Europe Facility, supplemented by private investment where commercially viable. Investment is needed not only for new high-speed lines, but also to maintain, renew, and modernise the existing rail network that underpins safe and reliable passenger services.

These priorities are reflected in the 2026 Passenger Rail Resolution adopted by CER and UIC members, setting out the sector's shared vision for a more connected, competitive and passenger-friendly European railway system.

DB Board Member for Long Distance Passenger Transport Michael Peterson said: *"CER and UIC members are proving how dynamic the long-distance passenger market in the EU is. A growing number of cross-border connections and possibilities to book international rail tickets show how these efforts turn into tangible improvements for passengers. But the High-Level Passenger Meeting has also highlighted the importance of political support when it comes to infrastructure financing, a level playing field with other modes of transport, and reducing barriers in interoperability. With such support, long-distance rail can grow even stronger according to the high passenger demand we see in Europe."*

UIC Director General, François Davenne said: *"The European rail sector is united behind an ambitious vision: making cross-border rail travel the preferred choice for passengers. To achieve this, we need sustained investment alongside open, interoperable and accessible solutions that any railway actor can deploy across Europe. By building on common standards and stronger cooperation across the sector, we can deliver best-in-class passenger services while accelerating connectivity between national networks. Meeting Europe's rail ambitions and climate objectives will require public and private investment on a new scale, supported by innovative financing approaches, including carbon-based mechanisms. More than ever, the sector must act together to turn this vision into reality."*

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"Europe has set ambitious objectives for passenger rail that railways are willing to deliver. This ambition must now be matched by the right conditions for investment and operations. We need a workable regulatory framework that builds on the solutions the sector has already developed, stronger coordination across borders, and sustained investment in a genuinely interconnected European rail network. Our common goal is simple: to make travelling across Europe by train easier, faster, more reliable and more attractive for passengers."*

The CER-UIC High-Level Passenger Meeting gives passenger rail CEOs a forum to explore joint solutions for improving rail travel across Europe and discuss key developments with policymakers. This year's meeting included guest contributions from Members of the European Parliament Dariusz Joński, Ana Vasconcelos Martins, Lena Schilling, Andreas Schieder and Vicent Marzà Ibáñez, as well as from Oana Gherghinescu, Executive Director of the European Union Agency for Railways, and Dominik Piotrowski, Deputy Head of Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport.

- You can find the 2026 Passenger Rail Resolution adopted by UIC and CER Members 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.

About UIC

UIC is the worldwide organisation for the promotion of rail transport at a global level and collaborative development of the railway system. It brings together some 200 members on all 5 continents, among them rail operators, infrastructure managers, railway service providers, etc. UIC maintains close cooperation links with all actors in the rail transport domain around the world, including manufacturers, railway associations, public authorities and stakeholders in other domains and sectors whose experiences may be beneficial to rail development. UIC's main tasks include understanding the business needs of the rail community, developing innovation programmes to identify solutions to those needs, as well as preparing and publishing a series of documents such as reports, specifications, guidelines and IRS that facilitate the implementation of the innovative solutions. For more information, visit www.uic.org or follow us on LinkedIn.