

European Railway Award 2025 Press Release

Brussels, 17 February 2025

Staunch rail advocates Enrico Letta, Dominique Riquet and Josef Doppelbauer celebrated at the 2025 European Railway Award, as EU rail sector sets sights on making Single European Railway Area a reality

The European railway sector has used the 18th edition of the European Railway Award to call on all actors, from policymakers to the broader sector and beyond, to move from planning to execution, in order to fully realise the benefits of the Single European Railway Area. An enhanced and truly connected European rail network is crucial in tackling the continent's biggest challenges.

Jointly organised by the [European Rail Supply Industry Association \(UNIFE\)](#) and the [Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies \(CER\)](#), the 2025 edition bestowed three awards during a prestigious ceremony at Belgium's Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels. '**A new journey for Europe's rail: From Inspiration to Realisation**' was the theme of this year's awards, which paid tribute to three driving forces for rail who helped pave the way to today's time for action.

Notable figures who took part in proceedings included European Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism **Apostolos Tzitzikostas**, Polish Minister of Infrastructure, **Dariusz Klimczak**, representing the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and MEP **Dariusz Joński**, Member of the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee.

As part of the evening's honours, Former Italian Prime **Minister Enrico Letta** was awarded the event's **Rail Champion** prize for his considerable efforts to raise awareness of rail's unique qualities, and to promote it as key to the future of European growth and prosperity.

Letta's highly influential report to the Council of the EU, '[Much More Than a Market](#)' calls for the planning, funding, and implementation of high-speed rail to connect European capitals, which is a key pillar of the green and digital transitions.

A **Lifetime Achievement Award** went to Former Member of the European Parliament **Dominique Riquet**, a strong ally for rail throughout his career. Over successive parliamentary mandates (2009-2024), he notably co-led the vital negotiations for the revision of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) regulation, while also supporting and driving long-term funding and financing for the benefit of rail networks across the European Union (in particular with the Connecting Europe Facility).

As part of the ceremony, **Josef Doppelbauer** was bestowed with an **Accomplishment Award** by his peers, celebrating more than 25 years of activity in the sector and two successful mandates as Executive Director of the European Union Agency for Railways from 2015-2024, where he championed the Fourth Railway Package and its implementation.

Remarks across the evening outlined the need for consistent funding through an ambitious Multiannual Financial Framework for 2028-2034, while also ensuring predictable regulation and completing outstanding policy frameworks and programs, such as TEN-T network upgrades and the roll-out of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).

This includes the sector calling on EU policymakers and Members of the European Parliament for a modernisation of infrastructure, the adoption of innovative technologies and integration of cross-border networks, which are vital for meeting the demands of a competitive European economy.

Attributable quotes:

Dariusz Klimczak, Polish Minister of Infrastructure, representing the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

"Rail transport in Europe is crucial for sustainable mobility, reducing emissions, and enhancing connectivity across regions. The Polish presidency focuses on enhancing Europe's security. Railways have a role to play in this regard. We need sufficient funding for expanding high-speed rail networks, responding to military needs and strengthening Europe's competitiveness."

MEP Dariusz Joński, Member of the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee

"To realize the goals of the updated TEN-T regulation, Europe must address its railway infrastructure and harmonise national rail traffic rules. Investment in infrastructure development and a strong commitment to railway funding in the upcoming MFF negotiations are crucial for creating a unified and efficient Single European Railway area."

Apostolos Tzitzikostas, European Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism

"As the EU enters a new era of policymaking, so does rail travel. My team and I are already working on key priorities - high-speed rail, single ticketing, digitalization, military mobility, competitiveness, and sustainability. With rail's revival firmly on the EU agenda, my focus is on accelerating its renaissance."

Enrico Letta, former Prime Minister of Italy

"In my journey across Europe, I was astonished to find a continent so seamlessly united by its purposes and values, yet so physically divided by its underexploited railways. A high-speed rail network connecting all EU capitals would embody the very essence of building a stronger, more integrated, and greener Europe."

Andreas Matthä, CER Chair and CEO of ÖBB

"The European Railway Award recipients celebrated this evening have helped open up new possibilities for rail. To continue building on these foundations, support is crucial. In light of the EU Commission's upcoming MFF proposal, I would like to point out the critical need for substantial dedicated funding to rail infrastructure, particularly cross-border projects. Given the complexity and long-term nature of these projects, the EU budget structure must support the full implementation of the TEN-T network. To achieve this, a minimum of 100 billion euros of EU co-financing is essential, as well as the continuation of the vital instrument CEF."

Dominique Riquet, former Member of the European Parliament

"The XIXth century was that of coal and rail, the XXth that of oil and road, the XXst marks the great return of rail: more environment-friendly, more high-volume/accessible to the masses, more social, safer. It will be up to the EU to bear this boom by harmonising the standards, supporting research and industry, and interconnecting the national network. There remains a lot of work for all of us."

Michael Peter, UNIFE Chair and CEO of Siemens Mobility

"The European Rail Award is not only a recognition of past accomplishments – it is a celebration of long-lasting impact and the momentum towards seamless and sustainable travel for Europe. This year, we honour those in public service who have driven progress and helped unite us across borders."

Josef Doppelbauer, former Executive Director of the European Union Agency for Railways

"Looking back to the past ten years, progress in building the Single European Railway Area has been possible through good cooperation within the sector and with the institutions. In order for rail to truly become the backbone of the European multimodal transport network, this cooperation needs to be continued, if not strengthened."

Magda Kopczyńska, Director-General for Mobility and Transport, European Commission

"It is my great pleasure to present this award to Josef today. Under his leadership, the Agency made significant strides in reducing national safety and technical rules that hinder cross-border rail, delivering real benefits for railways, passengers, and Europe as a whole. He has been a valued partner to the European institutions, and his contributions will be truly missed!"

The European Railway Award, jointly organised by the Association of the European Rail Supply Industry (UNIFE) and the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) celebrates the achievements of inspired individuals whose bright ideas, ingenious innovations and bold policy initiatives have contributed to enhance, grow and strengthen rail today and for the future. First presented in 2007, the event attracts more than 500 guests each year from all over Europe, including high-level politicians and transport stakeholders. The award comes with prize money donated to charity. This year the Ukrainian Red Cross was selected to receive the €10,000 donation.

For further information, please visit www.europeanrailwayaward.eu.



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