

Press release

Brussels, 25 March 2021



Railways address Europe's Transport Ministers ahead of Year of Rail debate

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) have addressed a letter to all EU Ministers of Transport to outline the priority needs of rail. The initiative comes ahead of a key gathering of Transport Ministers on 30 March, where they will open up a policy debate that could lead to Council Conclusions on rail.

On 29 March the European Commission's DG MOVE jointly with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council will hold their major event launching the European Year of Rail. This will set the scene for the EU Transport Ministers' debate the next day, looking at ways of promoting the development of the rail sector in Europe. The resulting recommendations may develop into conclusions on rail, which the Council would then adopt at its meeting of 3 June 2021.

To feed into the debate, CER sent a letter on 24 March signed by its Chair Andreas Matthä and its Executive Director Alberto Mazzola, outlining the priority needs of European railways.

- Railways must be able to make necessary short- and long-term investments in order to realise the decarbonisation goals laid down in the Green Deal.
- EU support must be ensured during and after the COVID-19 crisis, via a Temporary State Aid Framework or a dedicated scheme that must be adapted to the rail context and last as long as needed.
- Rail projects must also be considered as a natural destination for the NextGenEU recovery package.
- Fair and transparent pricing is the best way to decarbonise transport in Europe.
- Capacity increase of physical and digital infrastructure remains a pre-condition to allow the rail sector to attract more passengers and freight.
- It is fundamental to foster innovation through digitalisation of rail operations and services, such as ERTMS deployment, automated operations, Digital Automatic Coupling and smart ticketing solutions.
- Further efforts must be made to increase railways' job attractiveness, especially towards women and younger generations.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"CER thanks DG MOVE and the Portuguese Presidency for organising the Year of Rail launch event on 29 March and we wish the EU Ministers a fruitful first exchange the day after. CER values the excellent dialogue with the Portuguese Presidency, and we are confident that the enthusiasm shown for railways by Minister Nuno Santos will be shared by his fellow colleagues. The sector needs the Council to take a strong stand in favour of railways and hopes to see an ambitious text adopted in June."*

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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 73% of the rail network length, 76% of the rail freight business and about 92% 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).