

Connecting Europe Express reaches final destination after 20,000km journey

Today, the Connecting Europe Express reached its final destination of Paris after 36 days travelling across Europe - West to East, North to South, and even visiting neighbours outside the EU. This train was specially put together for the occasion of the European Year of Rail 2021, aiming to raise awareness of the benefits of rail and the challenges which still need to be overcome. The train made over 120 stops, crossed 26 countries and 33 borders, travelling on three different gauges along the way.

Commissioner for Transport Adina **Vălean** said: *"The Connecting Europe Express has been a rolling laboratory, revealing in real-time the many achievements of our Single European Rail Area and our TEN-T network to allow for seamless travel across our Union. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who helped us turn the Connecting Europe Express from an idea into reality, a packed and exciting itinerary, memorable meetings – of minds and persons – and a true flag-bearer for European rail."*



Andreas Matthä, Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) Chair and CEO of Austrian Federal Railways, said: *"The Connecting Europe Express has achieved two targets today. Not only has it reached its final destination in Paris but, more importantly, it has highlighted the challenges in cross-border train services. If another important target, the Green Deal, is to be a success, it must become as easy to drive a train through Europe as it is to drive a truck. For this to be achieved, rail will need more capacity and new investments in infrastructure. Framework conditions must be adapted to create a level playing field between all modes of transport. I congratulate and thank everyone involved in this highly successful project."*

The final event in Paris was an opportunity to present the initial conclusions drawn during the unique train journey.

- **First**, for rail to unleash its potential, a true cross-border, **modern, high-quality rail infrastructure** is a basic requirement. There is a clear need for joint action to complete the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T): the core network by 2030, and the comprehensive network by 2050. The Commission will propose changes to the TEN-T Regulation later this year. On 16 September, [a €7 billion call for proposals](#) under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) was launched, for projects targeting new, upgraded and improved European transport infrastructure. The EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility can support the modernisation and interoperability of rail infrastructure, plus key infrastructure projects, such as the Lyon-Turin lines, the Brenner Base tunnel and Rail Baltica.

- **Second**, existing infrastructure must be better managed and its capacity improved. Digitalisation can help. For example, deploying the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) will increase capacity, safety, reliability and punctuality. Research and innovation will also unlock more capacity, and the new 'Europe's Rail' partnership will build on the successful work of [Shift2Rail](#).
- **Third**, greater **pan-European coordination and common requirements** are needed, and the Single European Rail Area must be enhanced. For example, Europe's train drivers should be able to accompany their trains across borders, just as pilots and truck lorry drivers can. And the 4th railway package must be transposed quickly to eliminate other remaining obstacles created by national rules and establish an open and competitive European market for rail – technically, operationally and commercially.
- **Fourth**, rail needs to become **more attractive** to encourage more people and companies to choose rail. Improving ticketing and options for planning travel across transport modes would help, as would lowering the costs of rail travel in comparison to the alternatives. Against this backdrop, the Commission will present an Action Plan to boost long-distance cross-border passenger rail services in December.



Press release

Paris, 7 October 2021



Background

The Connecting Europe Express has been a collective European achievement. It has brought together national, regional and local authorities, society at large and the rail sector, from new entrants and incumbent operators to infrastructure managers and the supply industry. More than 40 partners from the sector joined forces to combine an Austrian sleeper coach with an Italian dining coach, a Swiss panoramic coach, a German seating coach, a French conference coach and a Hungarian exhibition coach; completing the standard gauge train with an Iberian and Baltic train. The railway sector association CER coordinated the technical and operational running of the trains with the 40 plus railway actors involved.

Throughout its journey, the train hosted several conferences and a mobile [exhibition](#), and welcomed school classes, policymakers, stakeholders and other citizens on board. Additional conferences and welcome events were organised along the way and the train stops coincided with key events such as the informal meeting of transport and energy ministers in Brdo, Slovenia, as well as the first-ever Western Balkans Rail Summit in Belgrade. In Halle (Saale), Germany, passengers witnessed the beginning of the era of digital automatic coupling for freight wagons as well as intermodal operations at the Bettembourg terminal in Luxembourg.

For More information

- [Connecting Europe Express](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Route and events](#)
- [Tourbook](#)
- [Exhibition](#)
- [Photo contest](#)
- [Partners](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [European Year of Rail](#)

Contact person

Cliona Cunningham
CER Head of Communications
E: cliona.cunningham@cer.be
M: +32 472 48 75 98



For the Commission:
info@connectingeuropeexpress.eu

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 [@CER_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) on Twitter.