

Celebrating women working in the railway sector

The 8th of March is the day women are praised, their achievements are celebrated and their rights are spoken of in order to help forge a gender equal world. Fighting inequality is fundamental in all spheres of our society and during the 2021 European Year of Rail, the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) is working to promote women in railways.

The railway sector's workforce is largely composed of men due to historical reasons. According to the latest statistics¹, the average share of women is 21.41% and even if the share is steadily increasing, this needs to be accelerated. CER members are strongly committed to the development of women's employment in the European railway sector and have been investing to enable this.

The European Union needs a solidary, democratic and engaged society to work together and shape its successful future. The aim is to achieve a more balanced gender ratio and an inclusive transport sector. Indeed, studies show that companies with a balanced workforce and an inclusive culture are six times more innovative and have significantly higher problem-solving competence². In the railway sector, increasing automation and digitalisation is leading to new job opportunities that are attractive for women. In the future, it is important to ensure that diversity is guaranteed, removing the obstacles that hinder competitive equal opportunities.

To achieve these goals, commitment at all levels is a prerequisite. To be successful as a business and avoid future labour shortages, talent must be hired and young women must be attracted and retained. Amongst the various measures CER members have been putting in place to achieve this, some of the most popular include for example more flexible working times and welfare systems to help with the work-life balance, measures to promote women's employment and career development, mentoring to attract young women and encouraging STEM studies (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

Within the framework of the Sectoral Social Dialogue set up by the European Commission, CER and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) have been active in this field since the beginning of the 2000s with various joint recommendations to have a better representation and integration of women in the railway sector. In July 2019, the social partners agreed to start negotiations on a joint European binding agreement in accordance with Article 155 TFEU. We look forward to pursuing our negotiations with ETF to reach a social dialogue agreement on women in rail, thanks to the help of the European Commission.

¹ https://www.cer.be/sites/default/files/20200402_Sixth%20Women%20in%20Rail%20report_FINAL.pdf

² Juliet Bourke and Bernadette Dillon, "The diversity and inclusion revolution, eight powerful truths", Deloitte Review January 2018

SNCB CEO and member of the CER Management Committee Sophie Dutordoir said: *"At SNCB, the openness to women is reflected more and more in the figures every year. However, the question of diversity is not just about gender distribution. A company is a reflection of the society in which it evolves, with its wide range of diversities in terms of age, abilities, gender, lifestyle choices, social status, culture, etc. Diversity is natural: every talent has its place at SNCB. It's a state of mind that must permeate the whole company."*

NS CEO and member of the CER Management Committee Marjan Rintel gave her perspective: *"Do I wake up every day with the thought of being a woman? No, I just wake up and go to work. But I do understand that it is important to sometimes reflect on the fact that I am a woman leading a big company. To show every little girl looking at a toy train: there are no limits to your ambition. Women of the world, keep it rail!"*

CER Chair Andreas Matthä (CEO, ÖBB Holding AG) added: *"To be successful as a company, but also as a sector, we need to recruit talents and increasingly reach out to women. A diverse workforce at all levels creates a thriving workplace. It is my goal as CER Chair and ÖBB CEO to achieve more diversity and a more balanced gender ratio in our sector. To this end we are currently working with our social partners towards a binding European agreement to encourage more women to take up rail professions."*

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"In my previous position, I was an Ambassador of Women in Transport and as the new Executive Director of CER, I am fully committed to keeping this issue at the top of the policy agenda. My wish for the European Year of Rail is that we will be successful in increasing the presence and responsibilities of women for a more gender-balanced railway sector."*

See also the Sixth Women in Rail Report on the CER website [here](#).

#IWD2021 #ChooseToChallenge #EUYearOfRail #MoreWomenInRail

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