

Press release

Brussels, 15 September 2021



A strong European identity only possible with the involvement of European youth

Today, President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, addressed the European Parliament to discuss the State of the European Union, describing a wide horizon of ambitions that range from Europe's recovery from the pandemic to the fight against climate change, from defence and security to international cooperation and the creation of an industrial basis for digital technologies. The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) warmly welcomes the President's statements and underlines that the European rail sector is proud to be a strong ally of the European Commission when it comes to providing sustainable mobility solutions to all European citizens and businesses.

CER and its members are working closely with the European institutions to achieve climate neutrality and will support the position of the Union's representatives at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow next November, when they will call for new global commitments against global warming.

Making the European Green Deal a reality is of the utmost importance and European railways are working relentlessly as the backbone of the EU green and digital transition. CER members rank among the top investors in all European countries and the sector is providing a wide range of flagship initiatives, which include high-speed links between European major cities, accessible and digitalised services for passengers, automated rail freight solutions as well as a vast deployment of state-of-the-art technology for rail infrastructure management. These projects must receive continued support in the coming years.

CER also fully endorses the President's words on European youth. **CER Executive Director, Alberto Mazzola stated** *"This is wonderful news! It makes perfect sense that the Year of Rail is followed by the Year of European Youth. CER is a proud partner in the organisation of the [Connecting Europe Express](#) (CEE), a train that is travelling throughout the EU and raising public awareness of rail as the greenest mobility solution. The CEE will arrive in Strasbourg on 6 October and Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the organisation Erasmus by Train have been invited to join our event, organised in collaboration with SNCF, which will focus on the topics of youth, rail and sustainability".*

The concepts of European youth and European identity have been intertwined since the creation of the [Interrail pass](#) and projects such as [DiscoverEU](#), which confirm that the construction of a strong European identity is only possible with the involvement of European youth. European students and our young workforce must be provided with the possibility to meet and travel under affordable conditions.

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Mr Mazzola further stated *“Extending DiscoverEU to all Europeans when they reach 18 years old will greatly contribute to the promotion of the EU Identity and railways would be proud to continue to be central to the programme. CER and its members stand ready to support the Year of European Youth and look forward to engaging with all institutions on this positive initiative”.*

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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).