

Press release

Brussels, 3 April 2024



Rail Sector calls on Transport Ministers to support Rail Connectivity and Digital Innovation

Speaking at the EU Informal Transport Council on 3 April, Dr Alberto Mazzola, Executive Director of the Community of European Railway & Infrastructure Companies (CER), flagged the importance of rail connectivity and digital innovation, with a particular emphasis on rail capacity, digital enablers, and the need for a European high-speed rail master plan.

The rail sector is in full support of the proposal for a new Regulation on Rail Capacity and Traffic Management currently being debated by EU law makers. This legislation is crucial for fostering modal shift and advancing the ambitious targets outlined in the Green Deal and Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy. It must ensure a system that is flexible, with adequate consultation of Railway Undertakings and include the creation of multi-annual financing for railway infrastructure. Anticipating a capacity increase of up to 4% – equivalent to nearly 250 million additional train kilometres or 8,000 km of new railway lines – CER called for a swift adoption of this Regulation to support the movement of people and goods on rail as quickly as possible.

Digital enablers such as the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), Digital Capacity Management (DCM), and the Open Sales & Distribution Model (OSDM) are game changers for the railway sector, increasing safety and enabling better interoperability and increased capacity, without increased infrastructure. These initiatives must be supported, notably with a sound governance and programme management for ERTMS and the adoption of the OSDM standard to allow the sector to meet its full [commitment on ticketing](#).

Dr Mazzola also shared the sector's vision for a European high-speed rail (HSR) master plan, which would connect all European capitals and major cities by 2050, granting over 60% of EU citizens access to high-speed rail and bringing [€750 billion in societal benefits](#).

Dr Mazzola also spoke at the high-level conference on rail freight entitled "Boosting Rail Freight Transport in Europe: what worked – and what still needs to be done" organised by the Belgian Presidency on 2 April. Speaking on capacity management, resilience of the network and technology, he underlined that while the rail system is committed to maximising the current infrastructure through innovation and digitalisation – with ERTMS and Digital Automatic Coupling playing a key role – there is nonetheless a need to invest in infrastructure and incorporate rail freight into the main policy areas of the EU, including those on climate change and military mobility. The EU's regulatory framework must support measures to promote the required modal shift to rail, while avoiding those that may cause an unintended negative impact such as in the case of the current revision of the [Weights and Dimensions Directive](#).

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"CER calls on the EU Member States to put rail at the heart of all upcoming green and transport policies. If the EU's ambitious sustainable mobility targets are to be achieved, it is essential to ensure fair competition*

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between modes, and to provide market incentives for people and businesses to use trains. ERTMS is a transformative technology for the sector and essential for EU interoperability and its deployment must be boosted if the many benefits are to be achieved. Likewise, high-speed rail is key to decarbonisation as it leads to significant reductions in car and air travel. With a HSR network connecting all EU capitals and major cities, rail market share on long distance traffic will increase above 50% and bring about true and lasting modal shift”.

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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).