



Press Release

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Isabelle Durant and Eric Fontanel receive the 2016 European Railway Award

The 2016 European Railway Award was presented yesterday evening to Isabelle Durant, former Vice President of the European Parliament, and to railway engineer Eric Fontanel. This is the ninth edition of the European Railway Award, where, since 2007, the European rail sector has celebrated and recognised the political and technical contributions of accomplished individuals to the sector. The ceremony, which took place at the Musées Royaux D'Art et Histoire in Brussels, was followed by the joint CER-UNIFE Annual Reception and attracted more than 500 guests from all over Europe, including high-level politicians and transport stakeholders.

The evening's keynote speaker, European Commissioner for Transport, Violeta Bulc, highlighted the importance of investment to the development of the European rail system, commenting, *"Our very first priority is to bring investments in the rail sector as without such investments rail won't be able to contribute to our decarbonisation and digitalisation objectives. The European Union must do its part by providing funds for infrastructure development and for R&D but also by establishing, with the 4th railway package, a regulatory environment more favourable to private investors, with clearer, more enforceable and more stable internal market rules."*

Representing the European Parliament, MEP Michael Cramer (Greens/EFA, DE), Chairman of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, underlined the need for fair competition between transport modes, remarking, *"The European railway sector should use their influence to push decision makers to make modal competition more fair regarding access charges. At the moment, we are doing the opposite of what is needed, there are 100% tolls on rail versus only 0.9% on roads—for example in Germany since 2010 track access charges are up 15% while road tolls for trucks are down 13%. It should be equal treatment between all modes—everyone pays or no one pays."*

Representing the Netherlands Presidency of the EU at the ceremony, Secretary-General of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, Lidewijde Ongering, commented *"The EU's railway sector faces many challenges in the coming years. But every challenge also creates new opportunities. We're fortunate to have experts from the technical and political arenas who know what's needed to take the EU railway sector to the next level. And it's fitting that CER and UNIFE are awarding prizes to individuals who have devoted much of their work to rail. A sector that drives the EU's economy, while at the same time making a substantial contribution to the greening of transport."*

CER Chairman and CEO of ÖBB Christian Kern congratulated the laureates and took the opportunity to emphasise that, *"We do not need new laws, but consistent and sensible implementation of the existing ones. And Europe needs its railway sector as a major backbone of European growth and jobs: more than one million employees and a €143 billion contribution to Europe's economic output speak for themselves."*

Newly elected UNIFE Chairman and President of Bombardier Transportation, Laurent Troger, praised the laureates' significant contributions to the sector and commented, *"The European rail industry is at a turning point where we all need to accelerate to ensure competitiveness while increasing the attractiveness of rail. All of us need to take decisive action to tackle the upcoming challenges. I am committed to move forward the key initiatives and collaborate with all stakeholders."*



The laureate for the **Technical Award 2015**, **Eric Fontanel**, is an accomplished railway engineer responsible for many rolling stock development projects throughout the world, including managing the Channel tunnel VHST (very high-speed train) consortium which produced the Eurostar operation. Furthermore, he has been an instrumental player in the development of European railway interoperability and the enhancement of rail research at the European level.

When accepting his award, **Eric Fontanel** remarked: *"I truly believe that what we built in 15 years with the European Association for Railway Interoperability and then afterwards the ERA, with the support of the whole sector—industry, operators, and infrastructure managers alike—and the collaboration of the European standardization bodies, is the strong foundation on which a reliable, environmentally friendly, safe and interoperable European railway system can be constructed. A rail system that Europe truly needs for its economic and societal development."*

The **Political Award winner**, **Isabelle Durant**, was the Vice-Prime Minister of Belgium and Minister for Transport from 1999 to 2003, before becoming Vice President of the European Parliament from 2009 to 2014. During her illustrious political career, she has always supported sustainable transport and as a Member of the European Parliament she vocally supported the improvement of framework conditions and appropriate regulation for the railway sector.

When accepting the award **Isabelle Durant** stated, *"Putting rail back at the centre of our transport systems, in the hearts of the railway workers, in the minds of the travellers and in the priorities of the decision makers - this for me is the significance of this award, which I feel very honoured to receive."*

Each award was accompanied by a donation of €10.000 to the charity of the laureate's choice. Isabelle Durant gave her prize money to Train World, and Eric Fontanel gave his to the Société Nationale de Sauvetage en Mer (SNSM).

For further information, please visit www.europeanrailwayaward.eu or contact:

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The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together more than 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, 80% of the rail freight business and about 96% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policy makers 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 via Twitter at [@CER_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways).

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UNIFE represents the European Rail Industry in Brussels since 1992. The Association gathers around 80 of Europe's leading large and medium-sized rail supply companies active in the design, manufacture, maintenance and refurbishment of rail transport systems, subsystems and related equipment. UNIFE also brings together 14 national rail industry associations of European countries. UNIFE members have an 84% market share in Europe and supply 46% of the worldwide production of rail equipment and services. For more information, visit www.unife.org or follow [@unife](https://twitter.com/unife) on Twitter.



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