

CER-UNIFE Joint Declaration

Brussels, 2 February 2026

Preamble

The EU rail ecosystem accounts today for 247 EUR Bn of EU GDP and supports more than 3 million jobs. We see railways standing at the crossroad of clean mobility, industrial competitiveness, territorial cohesion and efficient military mobility and as essential assets to achieve these goals. This is why, as leaders of Europe's rail sector, representing railway undertakings, infrastructure managers and the rail supply industry, we reaffirm our shared commitment to the resiliency and economic growth of the European Union.

We envision an integrated railway system that serves society and the economy with safety, efficiency, and reliability, powered by state-of-the-art, future-ready technology. Our system is resilient to both internal and external challenges, delivering affordability and robustness grounded in sound macroeconomic and microeconomic principles. Cutting-edge technology drives our implementation, guiding us toward a truly European railway network - seamless, borderless, and free of obstacles.

We support the strengthening of safety levels through capacity building reflecting our commitment to preventing accidents and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. We promote a strong safety culture and support the strengthening of the culture of risk management to identify risks and mitigating measures but also opportunities to improve the efficiency of operations while preserving the safety level.

We continue the modernisation of Europe's rail network by improving capacity, cross-border and intermodal connectivity especially to urban networks, ports and airports, removing bottlenecks and accelerating the deployment of digital and automated systems such as ERTMS. With sufficient infrastructure capacity, railways will be able to serve a considerably higher percentage of mobility demand in Europe and ERTMS can deliver capacity gains in the short run.

We lower the costs of the system, enhancing efficiency, boosting digitalisation and advancing the standardisation of key rail technologies also through Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking to make the system more affordable and attractive for long-term investment.

We expand rail services — high-speed, regional, urban, night trains, freight and multimodal — while increasing reliability to meet passenger and industry needs and support the modal shift required for Europe's climate and competitiveness goals.

We invest in research and innovation and will continue doing so, building on significant contributions already made to the Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking, and will continue working across the value chain to develop interoperable technologies, reduce life-cycle costs and speed up the deployment of mature innovations throughout Europe.

We call on the EU institutions to accompany us on this journey, providing support and partnership as we realise this vision of a harmonised, forward-looking, and globally competitive railway system.

Therefore:

- **The EU must keep a high level of the ambition for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034 and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).**

The Union must equip the next MFF with a significantly reinforced transport envelope under the Connecting Europe Facility. A CEF envelope of at least EUR 100 billion will foster the timely completion of the TEN-T core/extended core network, support digitalisation and safety, including ERTMS®, and offer predictable co-financing conditions for long-term infrastructure and rolling-stock investments. Through a coherent and coordinated approach of CEF, the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) and investment plans of Member States in the National and Regional Partnerships Plans (NRPP), the MFF must reflect rail's central role in Europe's climate, industrial and energy strategies.

- **Seamless Military Mobility must be enabled across Europe.**

The rail sector plays a crucial role in enabling rapid, high-capacity and secure dual-use mobility across the continent. We call on the European Union to substantially reinforce the Military Mobility envelope in the next MFF compared to the current programming period, and to improve coordination between the EU, Member States, NATO and the civil sector.

- **The High-Speed Rail Plan vision must become a reality.**

Europe must turn the vision set out in the Communication “*Connecting Europe through High-Speed Rail*” into a concrete, continent-wide programme. The EU must back this vision with all its political weight, establishing the right regulatory conditions for the rail sector, public investors and private ones to work jointly on high-value infrastructure projects and on creating efficient tools for rolling-stock financing. Within the upcoming EU Financing Strategy, innovative schemes (such as RAB and PPPs) should be further explored in order to mobilise third-party investment, complementary to public funding, and bundled at scale to meet the EU's ambitions for rail transport. Unnecessary overregulation must be avoided, especially when proven sector-solutions are in place. Our sector should be able to unfold its industrial capacity for innovative products in a competitive environment within market rules set by EU decisionmakers; such framework should foster innovation and competitiveness. Our aim is to promote greater harmonisation of technical legislation.

- **ERTMS® deployment and system stability must be accelerated.**

Full, synchronised deployment of ERTMS® including FRMCS is indispensable to modernise Europe's rail system. We ask for a reinforced EU-level governance structure, aligned national deployment plans, and strengthened funding for both infrastructure managers and operators, including onboard retrofitting and fleet renewal. ERTMS must be maintained stable with consistent core functionality. Enhancements and error corrections can be implemented over time, without compromising the integrity of the core system, and with a focus on protecting existing assets and investments. The roll out of DAC, ATO and DCM technologies is also vital for the future of the sector. With regard to the DAC, a coordinated implementation process is required, including uniform financing.

- **The Future of Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking must be ensured.**

The successor to Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking must be more ambitious and include pre-deployment activities to accelerate market uptake of research and innovation results across Europe. We request a stronger budget within the future Horizon Europe framework, enabling a more rapid deployment of mature technologies, and closer alignment with TEN-T and national investment planning. The Joint Undertaking should be empowered to drive standardisation and support a competitive European rail supply industry.

- **The Procurement Framework must be modernised.**

The current EU public procurement framework is rigid and often administratively burdensome, slowing down projects, discouraging technological excellence and third-party investments. The revision of the EU public procurement directives must simplify the procurement process to reduce significantly the time required for contract awarding, promote more proactively quality, life-cycle approaches for rail products and sustainability, and ensure a level playing field for all market participants as well as between European and third country suppliers.

We envision a European railway system that is the robust and efficient backbone of our society and economy—built on fair market principles and giving all actors the freedom to innovate and grow. We call on Europe to match this commitment with the ambition and leadership needed to create a rail system that boosts the Union's competitiveness, drives innovation and sustainability, and delivers a fully integrated, resilient, and future-ready network.

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