

WHY THE CER-UNIFE JOINT DECLARATION IS THE ROADMAP FOR A SOVEREIGN AND SECURE EUROPEAN NETWORK

As **Enno Wiebe** rallies UNIFE and CER behind a landmark Joint Declaration, he makes the case for a more assertive, united rail sector. With bold funding targets, faster digital roll-out and a single strategic voice, he argues this is the moment to position rail as the backbone of a sovereign, secure and resilient Europe.

In a world marked by turmoil and dramatic change, Europe must respond quickly and decisively to pressing geopolitical challenges.

Global challenges require a strong industrial base, and this in turn depends on a strong and efficient transport system. The rail sector provides part of the solution, as rail mobility forms the backbone of European logistics and mobility.

Because we as railway actors run the rail business, we must define how the railway evolves. Our solutions must be the path we follow, and we hope that those across the European institutions interpret this action as a step-up in responsibility for our respective domains.

The aim of the Joint Declaration between CER (Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies) and UNIFE (European Rail Supply Industry) is to make it clear that, as the rail operating community and rail supply industry, we now present a stronger, united front.

In doing so, we are taking control of our business and setting a clear course for the future.

Take for instance our call on financing. A Connecting Europe Facility of up to €100 billion in the next budget is a sizeable investment, and a significantly increased figure from the current €51.7bn in the Draft EU Budget Position presented last year.

We outline this target, because we now

have many tasks to achieve – ensuring the roll-out of ERTMS, investing in Military Mobility upgrades across the network and investing in the necessary Research and Innovation (such as a successor to Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking), in order to ensure we have brand new technologies that enhance resilience across European railways.

Modernisation is about boosting capacity at European level, having more cross-border links and better intermodal connectivity across mainline and freight networks and ports.


Digital and modern automatic systems lie at the heart of this – which is why we must invest in the indispensable European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) including the next generation of radio based communication FRMCS and the pre-deployment of the Digital Automatic Coupling.

Furthermore, we must ensure Europe can

remain both prosperous and protected from external threats. Many of the key agreements in our declaration focus on the idea that if the railways are not strong, Europe is not strong.

We cannot achieve these goals working in the silos we previously worked in as a sector. Establishing a broader coalition of railway sector players is something I have always advocated for, as it is in our interest to achieve shared goals.

Further to this, we would like to embark on this path together with our partners across the European institutions, including the European Union Agency for Railways and Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking, with the firm awareness that progress can only be achieved by moving forward together.

If we can truly deliver on these goals, Europe will be more secure and resilient, and an even better place to live. 

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Enno Wiebe

Enno Wiebe is the Director General of UNIFE. After completing his civil engineering studies at the University of Applied Sciences in Dresden, Germany, and the University of Cape Town, South Africa, he began his professional career at Deutsche Bahn. From 2007 to 2011, he worked at the International Union of Railways (UIC) in Paris, France. Before being appointed to UNIFE, Enno Wiebe served as the Technical Director of the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER), where he oversaw the technical domain, and other related policies and projects.