

Press release

Brussels, 13 September 2021



Adequate financing of rail projects essential for Western Balkans

The Western Balkans Rail Summit 2021 took place on 13 September in Belgrade, Serbia, gathering institutional and corporate stakeholders to discuss the future of rail transport in the region. The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) contributed to the debate highlighting the importance of the region for a well-connected Europe and calling for its inclusion in the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) along with adequate funding for rail projects.

Opened by Matej Zakonjšek, Director of the Transport Community Treaty Permanent Secretariat, the conference focussed on both projects & financing along with rail policy & operations. Speaking from the EU-perspective, CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola took stock of the rail freight and rail passenger situation in the region, the delicate balance needed between the virtues of an open market and the need to ensure services that are often not commercially viable, and which therefore should be covered by Public Service Obligation.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said *'Adequate financing of rail projects is a priority for the Western Balkans. In fact, an efficient rail system in the region will enable Central Europe to be better connected via rail to potentially very important commercial partners, such as Turkey and the Middle East. We must take all opportunities to remind the EU institutions that the TEN-T network should also include the Balkan route'*

EU policy on transport infrastructure aims to facilitate transport across Europe and reduce regional, economic, and social disparities by developing interconnected infrastructure for air, road, rail and shipping (the Trans-European Transport Network or TEN-T). Transport infrastructure policy at EU level is essential for the coordination of important transport projects, the overall development of cross-border and regional infrastructure as well as cohesion and social inclusion. It is an important enabler for European economic growth and provides opportunities for employment.

The **Connecting Europe Express** which arrived yesterday in Belgrade and continues today on its exciting five-week journey through Europe, encompassing visits and events in more than 100 towns and cities, is an excellent example of the unifying force of rail and the benefits of the Trans-European Transport Network.

CER welcomes the current revision of TEN-T Regulation 1315/2013 this December and invites the European Commission to consider the importance of including the Western Balkans in its proposals.

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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).