

Frans Timmermans

Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal

Adina Vălean

Commissioner for Transport

Elisa Ferreira

Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

European Transport Ministers

Brussels, 20 April 2020

A letter from the European rail sector for the need to integrate rail into the European post-COVID-19 recovery

Dear Executive Vice-President Mr Timmermans,

Dear Commissioner Vălean,

Dear Commissioner Ferreira,

Dear Transport Ministers,

We, the representatives of the European Rail Operators, Infrastructure Managers, and the European Rail Supply industry, are writing to you in the context of the upcoming revision of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF), and the need to integrate the rail sector into the European post-COVID-19 crisis recovery.

Rail can provide reliable, low-emission transport, helping to meet immediate-term emission reduction goals. However, policy actions need to be geared towards rail, and ensure that low-emission passenger, freight and urban transport options are supported over less environmentally friendly modes.

It is key therefore that the post-COVID-19 MFF does not look to return to the status quo, and that the ambitions of the European Green Deal are not forgotten but become a reality. The next MFF, particularly the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF 2), the next generation of Structural Funds and the Horizon Europe Framework Programme, need to be front and centre in ensuring the right approach to transport in the coming years, and should seek to make rail the core element of the European transport system, the backbone of mobility of tomorrow. CEF 2 needs to be expanded by allocating more budget resources to achieve rapid transition towards green and sustainable mobility.

Recent events have highlighted the importance of investing in **reliable economic actors** like rail:

- Investments in Europe's rail infrastructure benefit European society as a whole, ensuring safe and reliable transportation of people and goods, even amidst health crises such as the one stemming from COVID-19. **Further expansion and renewal of the existing infrastructure will offer significant opportunities to improve Europe's economy.**

- Rail freight companies have proved their strength in offering efficient cross-border cargo connections for large volumes of goods using minimal human resources. **Investing in the right resources and technologies allowing to maximise infrastructure capacity will help rail freight achieve its true potential.**
- As Europe has suffered under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, railways have stepped up to provide essential services to the population, while at the same time bearing the considerable financial impact of the collapse in regular passenger and freight numbers. An additional challenge will be the resumption of international rail passenger services that have come to an almost standstill due to closure of borders within and outside the EU. **European investments in rail infrastructure will reassure passengers and public and private financing in railways.**
- European rail manufacturers have continued to work at their best to provide the technology and innovation necessary for rail transport to get through the socio-economic storm provoked by COVID-19. Safeguarding the global competitiveness of the European rail supply industry will ensure that the digital and innovation uptake of rail transport continues to advance – including in the ERTMS field.

Bearing in mind the EU's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Europe, it is no less important to invest in **sound climate solutions**:

- Rail brings well-known wider environmental and emissions benefits.
- The environmental benefits of a shift to rail freight need to be fully considered.
- Greater support for long-distance, and high-speed rail across Europe should come from coordinated investments in direct city to city rail connections, especially when looking in comparison to other highly-polluting modes of transport. The EU should not be looking to return to the status quo, with all its accompanying environmental impacts.

The changes to Europe coming from the COVID-19 crisis will be long-lasting, but we believe that by looking at the economic opportunities and environmental benefits offered by a renewal and improvement of the European rail network, EU leaders can use this as a cost-efficient opportunity to meet several goals at once. Therefore, the new MFF should have the Green Deal at its core. In this regard, it should look to an expanded CEF 2 with an increased budget, an ambitious Cohesion Policy and a strong Horizon Europe Framework Programme that ensures the extension of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking.

Sincerely,



Libor Lochman
CER Executive Director



Philippe Citroën
UNIFE Director General