

Press release

Brussels, 24 September 2021



CER General Assembly unanimously adopts Women in Rail agreement

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) unanimously adopted the Women in Rail agreement during its 68th General Assembly on 20 September 2021, underlining CER members' full commitment to promoting more gender equality and diversity policies within their companies.

This autonomous agreement, under Article 155 of the TFEU is historic for several reasons. It is, in fact, the first autonomous agreement at European level on gender equality. It is also the first autonomous agreement in the railway sector for over 15 years. Furthermore, it was achieved during the COVID pandemic which necessitated the further challenge of virtual negotiations.

The Women in Rail agreement is therefore a major accomplishment which touches upon various policy areas and aspects of promoting women in the sector. From the recruitment process, female employee retention and promotion, to enabling them to access management levels, the text is already in motion and will lead to concrete changes, for the benefit of all.

The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) representing railway workers will vote on the adoption of the text on 27 October. If approved, CER and ETF will organise a celebratory signing ceremony with the support of the European Commission, in November. The exact date is still to be confirmed.

CER Chair Andreas Matthä, CEO ÖBB Holding-AG, said: *"I congratulate all negotiators involved, a real milestone has been achieved. This is a particularly positive signal in the European Year of Rail and a strong sign for cooperation between the social partners. The agreement takes up current challenges, sets ambitious goals and sets an example to other sectors. I am aware that the implementation will also pose challenges. However, the railway sector needs to act as a pioneer to safeguard the attractiveness of railways as an employer also for the future."*

CEO of NS, Marjan Rintel, said: *"Of course it shouldn't matter whether you are a man or woman when you want to work in rail. But to achieve just that, we sometimes need to reflect on the fact that more women are needed in the sector. The Women in Rail agreement is such a moment and that's why I applaud it wholeheartedly."*

CER Executive Director, Alberto Mazzola, said: *"CER is fully committed to this autonomous agreement, and I thank all our members, notably the delegation who helped draft the text for all their work. It shows what Social Dialogue at European level can achieve. This is a very good start and we can be proud to be leading the way on this fundamental topic."*

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Contact person

Cliona Cunningham
CER Head of Communications
E: cliona.cunningham@cer.be
M: +32 491 16 21 73

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).