

Attracting workers to railways – a sector for green and meaningful jobs

On 27 April, the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and Portuguese Railways (CP), in cooperation with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU, organised an event on Employment and Education in the European Year of Rail. Portuguese Minister for Infrastructure and Housing, Pedro Nuno Santos, welcomed participants by video message before a keynote speech by Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit.

The green and digital transformation is more than ever at the centre of the EU policy debate and will be key to determine tomorrow's job market. Rail has been a forward-looking employer across Europe for many years, providing modern high-skilled jobs. Railways are conscious however that they must keep pace to reach out to new talents, increase citizens' knowledge of the work in the sector, and make sure the million people it already employs have the right set of skills for the future.

Portuguese Minister for Infrastructure and Housing **Pedro Nuno Santos** noted that investments in railways should lead to more jobs and opportunities for all in an inclusive sector, where all who dream of railways have the opportunity to fulfil their career potential. Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, **Nicolas Schmit** highlighted that as per the Portuguese Railways slogan 'Always in movement', rail is innovative and moving forward. Furthermore, he listed a number of Commission initiatives such as the Pact for Skills, a shared engagement model for skills development in Europe, and underlined the importance of Social Dialogue.

The event included a panel discussion moderated by CER Executive Director **Alberto Mazzola**, with the participation of **Luís Andrade Ferreira**, Executive Director of the Portuguese Railway Competence Centre, Professor at the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Oporto, **Carlo Scatoli**, Senior Expert - Skills and Qualifications, DG EMPL, **MEP Barbara Thaler** (EPP, AT) and **Eckhard Voss**, Managing Partner, wmp consult.

The panellists agreed that since the railway sector employs around 1 million people directly and over 1.3 million indirectly, boosting the sector's attractiveness is a key priority, especially when we know that in the next 10 years, large parts of the workforce are due to retire. With the help of the European institutions, national and local level, this goal can be achieved.

Starting at a young age, the education systems can help promote the skills needed for tomorrow's workforce, but it is important to offer the same opportunities to all when it comes to choosing a career path. For those who are already in the workforce, the EU institutions are proposing a range of measures to help encourage upskilling and training with a view to retain the workforce and attract new talents. With railways being the more sustainable mode of transport, the younger generation should gravitate towards this sector, both as a means of transport and career path. Along with this endeavour to be modern, is the one to have more diversity and more women in the sector.

All of these issues are currently being addressed in EU-funded projects such as the *Skill Training Alliance for the Future European Rail system* (STAFFER in short) or *Employability in the Railway Sector in the Light of Digitalisation and Automation* (EDA Rail) whereby a wide range of stakeholders are involved and work together for a highly qualified and effective task force. Finally, the importance of social dialogue was underlined as a key way to work towards a more skilled and European workforce.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *“Commissioner Schmit put it in the best possible way: railways provide for green and meaningful jobs, and all should strive to raise the awareness among young professionals from all EU Member States on this fact. Rail is a key tool for the green and digital transition that our Union is undertaking, and all rail workers must feel like protagonists in this transition.”*

More information, including the recording of the event is available on the CER website [here](#).

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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 [@CER_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) on Twitter.