

## Celebrating International Women's Day with the European Women in Rail Awards

The winners of the very first European Women in Rail Awards were announced today during a hybrid ceremony hosted by the European Commission on the occasion of International Women's Day. The sector-led initiative, supported by the European Commission's Women in Transport Platform in cooperation with the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER), was devised during the European Year of Rail 2021 as a welcome opportunity to highlight the cause of women in transport and in rail in particular. By increasing the attractiveness of the rail sector to women, we can have a more mixed workforce, which has proven to lead to significantly higher problem-solving competence and innovative strength.

European Commissioner for Transport **Adina Vălean** opened the ceremony by video address, stating: *"On this International Women's Day, I am proud to honour these exceptional movers and shakers from across Europe. In organising today's awards, the rail sector is demonstrating its commitment to promoting diversity and equality. We clearly need more women in rail and I thank all winners for sharing their inspiring stories with us today! I hope their good examples and practices will pave the way for many others to follow, and for many more inspiring women to join the rail family!"*

Recognising achievements in **four award categories**, the Award puts the spotlight on exceptional initiatives for more inclusive, gender-balanced and safer workplaces and women who have a real impact on their environment. Having received over 50 nominations across the different categories, the jury composed of Adina Vălean, European Transport Commissioner, Vera Tax, Member of the European Parliament and Baiba Miltoviča, President of the European Economic and Social Committee's Transport Section, had the difficult task of selecting the winners:

- **Best Employer Award went to German rail operator Deutsche Bahn (DB).**

In 2020, DB decided to increase the proportion of women leadership from 20-30% by 2024, sparking a new recruiting strategy for women with a set of 30 measures that are unique to the market. The strategy focusses on HR marketing, recruiting and monitoring and has already increased the percentage of women hired. In 2021 over 76,000 applications were received from woman candidates, with more than 4,700 of them hired. A number of initiatives contributed to this success including a DB 'Women's Month' last March with various activities for employees as well as prospective candidates. DB also offers flexible employment conditions and a family-friendly working hours model – for women and men. Special networks and mentoring round off the offer for women.

**Martin Seiler**, Member of the Management Board of Deutsche Bahn AG responsible for Human Resources and Legal Affairs, was present to collect the award, stating: *"On behalf of Deutsche Bahn, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for receiving this award. We are extremely proud and consider this a recognition of our efforts to make gender equality a non-negotiable and top priority at our company. Looking ahead, we will continue our work to promote even more women in the railway sector, to bring about concrete improvements and positive change."*

- **Best Initiative against Harassment Award went to Catalan metropolitan mobility operator Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya (FGC).**

FGC has made the fight against sexual and gender-based harassment one of the main goals in its Equality Plan and Activism Strategy. Internally, it has taken several actions to promote an inclusive culture and raise awareness among staff to tackle the issue, notably by updating and communicating the company protocol, appointing specially trained reference persons, and providing training to more than 750 staff members on how to identify and handle abusive and harassing situations. For passengers, security audits were made at several stations taking a gender perspective and followed up by concrete actions such as better lighting and visibility of emergency points and a sexual harassment reporting app, to improve the real and perceived security of transport users.

Expressing her thanks for the award, **Marta Subirà**, CEO of FGC, underlined that: *"Inclusion and gender balance is not something that can be addressed just as a policy or a management decision, It is a transformation that requires commitment and involvement of the company as a whole. We encourage FGC's workers to get involved and become gender-balance activists in order to achieve effective and lasting results."*

- **Best Improvement of Inclusion Award went to French rail operator SNCF.**

For 30 years, SNCF has committed to promote inclusion and diversity in the workplace through a strong social inclusion programme. The first of eight social partners agreements for the employment of disabled people was signed in 1992 and since 2006, SNCF has implemented four agreements on gender equality and gender diversity. SNCF has created a dedicated Diversity department to develop measures to combat all types of discrimination (e.g. gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age...), for example through training and raising awareness among its employees. 30 SNCF Gender equality correspondents contribute to awareness-raising activities and make sure that the agreements are implemented. Moreover, "SNCF Mixité", created in 2012, is the biggest employees' network in France dealing with gender issues, counting approximately 11,000 members.

**Jean-Pierre Farandou**, CEO of SNCF, said: *"Every employee, regardless of their job and position in the company, is an essential part of our collective success. Promoting the inclusion of everyone is not optional. At SNCF, we believe that this is one of our strengths and that it gives us the chance to build a collective that works for inclusive and sustainable mobility, everywhere and for all of us."*

- **The Rising Star Award went to Linda Allen, from Ireland's rail operator Iarnród Éireann - Irish Rail.**

As Head of Talent Management, Linda Allen has over the last 2 years transformed the experience and opportunities for all women in Irish Rail. The Talent Management Centre established by Linda has, in a very brief period, introduced a number of programmes providing women employees the opportunity to advance their careers. For instance, the Women in Leadership Development Programme, delivered in collaboration with Trinity College Dublin, has now completed two terms. Linda has also introduced a Women in Rail Network as well as a Mentoring Programme. The impact of Linda's initiatives will be seen not just in the short term but also over the years to come, with participants reporting increased networking skills, self-awareness and confidence to apply for promotions.

Joining by video link to accept the award, **Linda Allen** stated: *"It is critical for me that all the work we do takes a systemic approach to leadership. For success, programmes need to be female centric and not female only programmes. We need to help employees recognise how their role as leaders is about them as individuals, their relationship with their teams and their relationships with the wider organisational system."*

The event was moderated by CER Executive Director **Alberto Mazzola**, who concluded that: *"Organising the first European Women in Rail awards has led to further putting the spotlight on an issue that is of major importance to CER and our members. Last year, we signed the Women in Rail agreement which we are now in the process of implementing and the winners of today's awards help illustrate how initiatives on gender balance lead to real change for a better work environment."*



*Photo credit: European Commission / Olivier Polet*

### **Contact person**

Cliona Cunningham  
CER Head of Communications  
E: [cliona.cunningham@cer.be](mailto: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 79% of the rail network length, 77% of the rail freight business and about 90% 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](http://www.cer.be) or follow us on Twitter [@CER\\_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cer).