

Europeans back train travel as key to making tourism more sustainable, EU survey finds

A recent EU survey shows that a large majority of European citizens support promoting train travel as a key step towards making tourism in Europe more sustainable, while 2 in 3 Europeans say they would be willing to choose train travel for tourism if more connections were available. As the European Commission prepares an EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism, the survey findings make a strong case for railways to be included in policymakers' plans.

The European Commission's initiative to put forward a strategy that balances tourism's economic, social and environmental impacts provides a golden opportunity to better synergise the tourism, travel and transport sectors. With **75% of tourism-related emissions in the EU coming from transport**, essentially for oil consumption, train travel, as the most energy efficient and sustainable mode of mass transport, has an important role to play in decarbonising tourism across the EU.

Commissioned by the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and carried out by Polling Europe, the survey involved more than 5,000 interviews across Europe to understand EU citizens' perceptions of sustainable tourism, the factors influencing their choice of transport mode, and train travel habits in Europe:

- When asked about the importance of promoting train travel to make tourism in Europe more sustainable, **74% of citizens** agreed that **travelling by train is key to greater sustainability in tourism** in Europe.
- Regarding the **factors influencing the choice of transport mode** for tourism purposes, either within an EU country or to neighbouring EU countries, citizens were presented with five options. Total travel **cost, comfort during the journey and total travel time** were identified as their top three priorities. Environmental impact ranked fourth, while the **booking process was the least important** factor influencing travellers' choice of transport mode.
- When asked about the likelihood of using trains for tourism within their own country or to neighbouring EU countries, **2 in 3 Europeans** said they **would choose train travel for tourism** if more connections were available.

Trains are not only the most effective way to substantially cut the transport-related fuel consumption and emissions generated by tourism, but also a means of tackling overtourism. A wide range of **national rail passes** across EU Member States, as well as international products such as Interrail, help redirect visitors away from saturated hotspots towards "hidden gems" and encourage off-season travel, supporting balanced **regional development** and local economies.

During last February's Strategic Dialogue convened by European Commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas to prepare the EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism, CER called for synergies with the EU Action Plan for a European High-Speed Rail Network. According to the European Travel Commission, 81% of Europeans planned to travel in 2026, with most intending to holiday within Europe. Connecting all major European capitals through **high-speed rail** would provide the many Europeans who travel within the continent a

viable travel option to reach their destination more sustainably and will reduce Europe's oil consumption by 11.6 billion barrels by 2070.

To attract more tourists to train travel, European railways are also calling on policymakers to create a genuine level playing field among transport modes. This includes **removing VAT on international rail tickets**, addressing **energy taxation** on rail electricity and applying the **polluter-pays principle** so that the greenest travel choice becomes the most affordable.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"Today's survey confirms that Europeans strongly support train travel and recognise its key role in making tourism more sustainable. Railways are the fastest way to cut tourism-related emissions and oil consumption in Europe and a key enabler of connecting tourists with less frequented destinations and regions. European railways call on the European Commission to include rail transport in the upcoming EU Strategy on Sustainable Tourism, address traveller's priorities and make the greenest transport choice the most affordable."*

About the survey

The interviews were conducted by Polling Europe between 3 and 10 July 2026, on a representative sample of 5,048 adults aged 18 and over across the 27 EU Member States. Sampling was proportionally distributed according to national populations, age and gender quotas were applied in each country based on the latest Eurostat data to ensure demographic representativeness.

The survey report can be downloaded [here](#).

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About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The diverse and comprehensive membership made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, covers the large majority of the rail infrastructure network, rail freight business and rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policy makers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a resilient, competitive, and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on social media.