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REPORT

on connecting Europe through high-speed rail
(2026/2003(INI))

Committee on Transport and Tourism

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on connecting Europe through high-speed rail

(2026/2003(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 9 December 2020 entitled ‘Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future’ ([COM\(2020\)0789](#)),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 (‘European Climate Law’)¹,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 November 2025 entitled ‘Connecting Europe through High-Speed Rail’ ([COM\(2025\)0903](#)),
- having regard to European Court of Auditors Special Report No 19/2018 of 26 June 2018 entitled ‘A European high-speed rail network: not a reality but an ineffective patchwork’,
- having regard to the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) report of 30 March 2026 entitled ‘Rail Resilience to Climate Change’,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 22 April 2026 entitled ‘AccelerateEU – Energy Union’ ([COM\(2026\)0370](#)),
- having regard to Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/856 of 18 April 2023 on the request for registration, pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of the European citizens’ initiative entitled ‘Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network’²,
- having regard to the report by Enrico Letta of 17 April 2024 entitled ‘Much more than a market – Speed, Security, Solidarity: Empowering the single market to deliver a sustainable future and prosperity for all EU citizens’,
- having regard to the report by Mario Draghi of 9 September 2024 entitled ‘The Future of European Competitiveness – A Competitiveness Strategy for Europe’,
- having regard to the Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1153 and (EU) No 913/2010 and

¹ OJ L 243, 9.7.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1119/oj>.

² OJ L 110, 25.4.2023, p. 37, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2023/856/oj.

repealing Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013³ (TEN-T Regulation),

- having regard to European Court of Auditors Special Report 02/2026 of 19 January 2026 entitled ‘EU transport infrastructure – Further delays and some cost increases, but a reinforced governance framework is in place for the future (an update of ECA special report 10/2020)’,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 16 March 2026 entitled ‘Guidelines on State aid for land and multimodal transport’⁴,
 - having regard to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/2177 of 22 November 2017 on access to service facilities and rail-related services⁵,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism (A10-0262/2026),
- A. whereas high-speed rail is an element of the rail network that is among the most energy-efficient and is, despite being subject to the electricity generation mix, among the lowest-emission modes of transport for medium- and long-distance mass mobility; whereas high-speed rail constitutes a strategic asset for the EU’s objectives in terms of competitiveness, territorial cohesion, modal shift, climate neutrality and strategic autonomy; whereas its development should contribute to reducing territorial disparities and strengthening the connectivity of peripheral and less-developed regions;
- B. whereas rail emissions decreased by 68.1 % between 1990 and 2019 despite growing rail transport activity and higher overall emissions in transport; whereas high-speed rail can shift demand away from more carbon-intensive transport modes, provided it remains reliable, available and competitively priced;
- C. whereas Europe is a global leader in the rail sector, generating more than EUR 45 billion in annual revenues across the rail supply industry and high-speed rail technologies, thereby contributing to the EU’s competitiveness, industrial leadership and highly skilled employment; whereas maintaining and strengthening this leadership and supporting high-quality employment is important for the continued expansion, modernisation and integration of the European rail network, as this will help to strengthen the Union’s industrial sovereignty and high-quality employment;
- D. whereas the fragmentation of the European rail network increases costs and reduces efficiency, discourages investment in innovation, skills and expertise, and limits the sector’s capacity to develop highly competitive solutions, achieve economies of scale and maintain its global technological and industrial leadership; whereas a competitive and sustainable European manufacturing base, and sustained investment in skills and technological leadership and strategic resilience, are essential to strengthen the EU’s industrial sovereignty and maintain high-quality employment, which would help to avoid strategic dependency on suppliers from non-EU countries;

³ OJ L, 2024/1679, 28.6.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1679/oj>.

⁴ OJ C, C/2026/1656, 30.3.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/1656/oj>.

⁵ OJ L 307, 23.11.2017, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2017/2177/oj.

- E. whereas the political legitimacy of large-scale European investment depends on the delivery of tangible benefits throughout the EU and the delivery of a truly connected and integrated European rail network that should improve connectivity and close infrastructure gaps between western, central and eastern Europe, ensuring that all Member States can benefit from the economic, social and environmental advantages of high-speed rail; whereas high-speed rail has a key role to play in enhancing long-distance connectivity, thereby supporting modal shift, labour mobility and sustainable tourism;
- F. whereas conventional rail remains one of the most widely used modes of transport for citizens and freight, making it one of the primary instruments of territorial cohesion; whereas investment in high-speed rail should complement and reinforce, rather than divert funding from, conventional, regional and suburban rail services, improving accessibility and the overall resilience of the European rail network;
- G. whereas the development of a high-speed rail network remains uneven across the EU, with some Member States lacking lines capable of operating at higher speeds and persistent missing cross-border links; whereas closing these infrastructure gaps and ensuring a more balanced geographical distribution of investment, particularly in regions where high-speed rail remains underdeveloped, must be a priority, so that the tangible benefits of a European high-speed rail network are shared across all regions;
- H. whereas rail continues to face a structural disadvantage compared to other modes of transport; whereas addressing VAT asymmetries would help to mitigate the distortion of fair competition between modes of transport and foster the EU's sustainability, connectivity and modal-shift objectives for both passenger and freight transport;
- I. whereas closing the estimated EUR 345 billion investment gap by 2040 requires public and private investment that takes into account regulatory predictability, stable project pipelines and appropriate risk allocation; whereas governments investing in the development of high-speed rail infrastructure can face persistent budgetary constraints, requiring the exploration of complementary long-term financing mechanisms capable of mobilising additional sources of long-term capital, provided that the public interest and long-term affordability for rail users are safeguarded; whereas such financing decisions must be guided by objective socio-economic cost-benefit assessments, taking into account implementation schedules, the network's contribution to the completion of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), and maintenance costs, and by the efficient use of public resources;
- J. whereas the long-term performance of rail networks requires stable, predictable and ring-fenced financing for maintenance, renewal, modernisation and digitalisation, in order to increase interoperability, safety and reliability; whereas this should be achieved through different measures, including reasonable and appropriate track access charges and the efficient use of EU and national public resources, while bearing in mind that affordable and attractive services in the rail market attract more passengers and generate more revenue; whereas strengthening fair competition in the European rail sector should be regarded as part of the solution to increasing rail demand and unlocking the full potential of the Single European Railway Area;
- K. whereas accessible and affordable rail services are essential to reducing transport

poverty and ensuring equal mobility across the EU; whereas the EU rail sector, which employs over 1.3 million workers across manufacturing, construction, maintenance and operations, faces labour and skill shortages and a gender gap and therefore requires investment in wages, working conditions and skills development to attract and retain the diverse workforce needed to sustain Europe's industrial leadership and deliver future high-speed rail services;

- L. whereas the ERA, established by Regulation (EU) 2016/796⁶, is the central EU authority for interoperability, safety certification and vehicle authorisation in the Single European Railway Area; whereas its reinforced mandate, resources and coordination capacity are indispensable to the timely delivery of the network;
- M. whereas the delivery of a truly connected and integrated European rail network requires an interoperable system, achieved through the deployment of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) and the completion of cross-border missing links; whereas fragmented rules and insufficient interoperability continue to undermine the competitiveness of rail, while the EU should remain open to supporting flexibility or transitional mechanisms for Member States facing particularly high adaptation costs, where such measures can facilitate progress towards interoperability without undermining the long-term objective of a fully integrated European railway area;
- N. whereas hyperloop technology, as a next-generation form of high-speed guided transport, is referred to in the TEN-T Regulation and is the subject of a Commission fact-finding study and the Hyper4Rail project under Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking, while no EU regulatory framework for its testing and cross-border interoperability currently exists; whereas, in line with the mission letter addressed to the Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism, the Commission should, before the end of this term, present a strategy for hyperloop technology as a potential complement to the European high-speed rail network, which should include a regulatory roadmap, enable support for cross-border pilot projects and ensure compatibility and full alignment with TEN-T planning objectives;
- O. whereas the effectiveness of the European high-speed rail network depends on its integration with other modes of transport; whereas railway stations should function as fully connected intermodal hubs linking high-speed and conventional rail with urban and regional public transport, ports, airports, cycling and other first- and last-mile solutions, thereby strengthening regional competitiveness and improving the experience of commuters and business travellers while supporting a more sustainable tourism model;
- P. whereas the simplification of ticketing and the integration of rail services are essential conditions for achieving modal shift; whereas such integration should foster a well-functioning and competitive rail market that serves the public interest and results in greater investment in the rail network;

I. Connecting Europe: people, regions and capitals

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2016/796 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the European Union Agency for Railways and repealing Regulation (EC) No 881/2004 (OJ L 138, 26.5.2016, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/796/oj>).

1. Welcomes the 2025 Commission communication entitled ‘Connecting Europe through High-Speed Rail’ (COM(2025)0903); calls for a genuine European high-speed rail network that is interoperable, innovative, accessible and intermodal, delivering genuine value for citizens and public investment alike and connecting European capitals and regions in line with the EU’s objectives with regard to the climate, competitiveness, territorial cohesion, connectivity, safety and resilience; stresses that this network should also be developed to strengthen the wider rail system, including through time-differentiated mixed-use operations;
2. Stresses that this network must serve all major urban nodes, whether through direct high-speed rail services or effective connections to the high-speed rail network, ensuring that territorial equity extends beyond major metropolises to medium-sized towns and peripheral territories; calls on the Commission to enshrine this as a planning criterion, with mapping of areas not currently covered by high-speed rail networks, in close cooperation with the Member States, identifying missing cross-border links and proposing priorities and a timeline for their gradual integration into the network;
3. Stresses the importance of a planning methodology in which connectivity to the European core network is treated as a structural entitlement of every region – including peripheral, outermost and currently under-connected regions – as an instrument of territorial cohesion, integration and convergence of mobility opportunities across the EU;
4. Stresses that the expansion of high-speed rail must complement – and never come at the expense of – conventional, regional, suburban and rail freight services; calls for a ‘network-first’ approach, which should integrate high-speed infrastructure planning with regional and urban mobility networks, local public transport, active mobility and major multimodal transport hubs; underlines that this requires the upgrading, modernisation and interoperability of existing lines, which remain central to the European rail system in their own right, backed by sufficient, predictable and long-term funding;
5. Highlights the fact that new high-speed rail infrastructure can substantially increase capacity on the conventional network for regional passenger services and rail freight, facilitating a greater modal shift of freight transport from road to rail; underlines that this strengthens the competitiveness of rail freight and the overall resilience of the European rail system;
6. Calls for the Member States to assess the impact of high-speed rail infrastructure expansion on conventional passenger and freight services, taking into account the mixed-use nature of infrastructure upgrades, and the extent to which this expansion frees up the capacity and improves the quality and operational performance of conventional rail services;
7. Calls on the TEN-T European Coordinators to identify missing links, abandoned or underserved sections or cross-border connections with high social, economic, territorial and European added value, paying particular attention to peripheral and semi-peripheral Member States where high-speed rail coverage remains limited, to ensure that the network’s expansion contributes to territorial cohesion rather than deepening existing connectivity gaps;

8. Calls for the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), Interreg and other relevant shared-management funds to be channelled, on the basis of the principle of fully interoperable and standardised solutions, into low-cost, high-impact projects designed to bridge these gaps, thereby eliminating bottlenecks, modernising infrastructure and enhancing capacity, while prioritising the closest and fastest routes between major urban areas;
9. Calls on the Commission to give priority to projects contributing to the completion of strategic cross-border corridors, the completion of the TEN-T core network and the reduction of long-standing infrastructure disparities across the EU; highlights the fact that the Member States should ensure the coherence of their national transport and investment plans with the priorities established under the TEN-T Regulation, including the work plans of the TEN-T European Coordinators, and considers that EU funding should give due consideration to this consistency between national planning and jointly agreed European objectives;
10. Welcomes the Commission's intention to coordinate a financing strategy – the high-speed rail deal – for the roll-out of the high-speed rail network; calls on the Commission and the Council to structure the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework (MFF) in such a way as to ensure adequate and dedicated funding for the development of the high-speed network, and to make full use of existing and future EU funds, financing instruments and European Investment Bank guarantees to ensure inclusive and equitable access to rail transport, including high-speed services, for all regions and citizens; underlines the need for any financing strategy to ensure that the use of high-speed rail infrastructure is optimised to serve a diverse range of services and passenger profiles, including through fair pricing, thereby maximising the public value of investments and ensuring that the benefits of high-speed rail are shared as widely as possible;
11. Calls for national, regional and local authorities, as well as relevant rail network users, to be consulted from the early stages of both planning and deployment, paying particular attention to cross-border regions; underlines that high-speed stations must function as fully integrated intermodal hubs, ensuring efficient connections with conventional rail, regional public transport and, where appropriate, airports and freight terminals, so as to enable modal shift and seamless door-to-door journeys across Europe;
12. Highlights the importance of providing adequate bicycle carriage capacity on high-speed rail services to strengthen consumer choice and intermodal connectivity and unlock the potential of long-distance and cross-border cycling tourism as a sustainable form of travel; considers that multipurpose carrying spaces within carriages, together with innovative services for transporting large items to destination, can foster the uptake of rail as a means of travel;
13. Emphasises that a European high-speed rail network should not be limited by the external borders of the EU; calls for closer cooperation with neighbouring countries, including Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, to integrate key destinations into a wider European high-speed rail network, thereby enhancing mobility, economic ties and passenger choice;

II. Delivering the modal shift: high-speed rail for a resilient and integrated Europe

14. Underlines that a modal shift towards high-speed rail will contribute to the EU's decarbonisation and connectivity objectives and serve as a strategic-autonomy lever as well as an economic opportunity that enhances competitiveness and reduces dependence on imported fossil fuels, and will free capacity on conventional lines and bolster the EU's mobility system;
15. Welcomes the modal-shift ambition outlined in the 2025 communication; considers that the Commission should set, by 2027 and following a comprehensive impact assessment, EU objectives for high-speed rail deployment alongside a 2040 modal-shift objective towards rail, in order to reduce the carbon intensity of the transport sector; stresses that any such target must respect Member States' geographic specificities;
16. Considers that the modal shift should be underpinned by rail becoming a genuinely competitive and attractive alternative to other modes of transport – in terms of travel time, cost, service quality and reliability – coupled with effective enforcement of passenger rights; considers, furthermore, that this requires market access, including for new entrants, and cross-border ticketing integration with particular attention paid to connectivity needs in peripheral and island regions, whose full integration into the high-speed rail network will often depend on effective connection with conventional rail services, and, where appropriate, intermodal connections;
17. Supports competitive high-speed corridors with top speeds of at least 250 km/h, with an ambition of achieving connections with speeds of 350 km/h, subject to independent cost-benefit analyses integrating criteria relating to geography, climate, demand, territorial cohesion, life cycles and the specific operational characteristics of individual corridors; considers that the potential for differentiated passenger and freight speeds should be explored, as should the possibility of express freight services using electric multiple units;
18. Recalls that all high-speed rail infrastructure and rolling stock operating in the EU, including that operated by companies from non-EU countries, must, respectively, comply with the relevant Technical Specifications for Interoperability and be certified by the ERA;
19. Calls for fair and efficient competition across transport modes in line with the 'polluter pays' principle, taking due account of the specific characteristics of each mode of transport, including VAT and other aspects, thereby supporting the EU's energy resilience, strategic autonomy and climate goals;
20. Welcomes the ongoing legislative work on the Passenger Package, which should contribute to the development of a transparent and interoperable European ticketing ecosystem that serves the public interest; expects the package to deliver interoperable, visible, accessible and easily comparable rail ticket offers, as well as a legally enforceable guarantee of onward travel in the event of missed connections involving multiple rail operators, while ensuring that the ticket distribution market creates fair value for passengers, railway operators and the wider European rail system;
21. Welcomes rail subscription initiatives in which all operators can participate as effective tools to simplify access to rail services; encourages Member States and railway undertakings to make high-speed train tickets more affordable, including through accessible fares and appropriate reduced fare or subscription schemes; calls for greater

transparency in ticket pricing, and, in particular, stresses the importance of ensuring that personalised pricing practices do not undermine fair access to rail services, given that lower, more predictable fares can boost ridership and support modal shift;

22. In line with the newly adopted CountEmissionsEU framework, encourages rail operators to calculate, display and share emissions data with relevant third parties, including ticket vendors and mobility platforms, so as to ensure that consumers have access to transparent information and can make informed choices between modes of transport; considers that this will allow rail to fully leverage its environmental and energy-efficiency advantages in comparison with other modes of transport;
23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, in the context of the Streamlining Directive⁷, to bring forward measures to simplify permitting and investment procedures for high-speed rail projects, and reduce administrative complexity – taking into account environmental assessment and public participation standards – including through one-stop-shop approaches and shorter approval timelines where appropriate, in order to accelerate investment and project delivery;

III. Investing in high-speed infrastructure: integrated, efficient, safe and resilient

24. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to deliver a European high-speed rail deal as a key step towards closing the estimated EUR 345 billion high-speed rail investment gap, in line with the development of an EU rail financing strategy announced in its communication entitled 'Connecting Europe through High-Speed Rail'; calls for a European rail industrial strategy to coordinate how the EU builds, signals and operates its network, avoiding fragmentation; considers that delivering this requires the accelerated uptake of standardised and interoperable technologies, and a coordinated roll-out across the EU to drive industrial-scale delivery; considers that a coordinated industrial strategy should include supporting EU manufacturers and strengthening technological sovereignty and resilient supply chains;
25. Stresses the need to preserve and strengthen the CEF as the dedicated instrument for financing transport infrastructure, complemented by the European Competitiveness Fund to support investment in strategic rail infrastructure, innovation, industrial capacity and rolling stock acquisition, taking all actors into consideration; calls for an ambitious CEF for 2028-2034, underpinned by adequate, stable, predictable and long-term financing to ensure the network's successful deployment; calls for synergies with other financial instruments to be maximised and for impact at both cross-border and national level to be enhanced, through investment in last-mile sections and connectivity to urban nodes and multimodal passenger hubs, ensuring that investment in high-speed rail benefits the wider transport network and strengthens territorial cohesion, taking into consideration the Member States and regions with the largest infrastructure gaps and supporting both new construction and the modernisation of existing lines;
26. Calls on the Commission and the Council to shape the 2028-2034 MFF in such a way as to ensure adequate and dedicated funding for the development of the high-speed rail network; recalls that cohesion policy and its successor instrument, the national and

⁷ Directive (EU) 2021/1187 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 on streamlining measures for advancing the realisation of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) (OJ L 258, 20.7.2021, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1187/oj>).

regional partnership plans, should continue to support rail investments that promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, including high-speed rail infrastructure upgrades, where cohesion policy contributes to the completion of the TEN-T network, strengthens cross-border connectivity, improves accessibility for peripheral and less-connected regions and delivers wider benefits for the European rail system;

27. Supports the exploration of innovative financing mechanisms to cover the costs of a modern and expanded European high-speed rail network; underlines that attracting public and private investment in high-speed rail depends on projects capable of delivering high societal value while yielding sustainable economic results, within an attractive environment for long-term investment that is based on a robust socio-economic assessment; calls for the simplification and streamlining of procedures that increase costs and uncertainty for rail infrastructure projects; calls for de-risking measures to mobilise investment while ensuring that it remains aligned with the public interest;
28. Calls for the removal of cross-border bottlenecks and the full implementation of TEN-T commitments to be key priorities of EU funding for high-speed rail, including through the upgrading and interoperability of rail infrastructure where needed, the efficient integration of multimodal freight terminals, and the completion of the European rail network in areas essential to EU-wide connectivity; insists that CEF Transport rail funding under the 2028-2034 MFF should be prioritised for cross-border sections and ERTMS deployment, ensuring that the TEN-T targets for 2030 are reached, complemented by national and regional partnership plans, and maintaining the current earmarking system under the next CEF; underlines that the effectiveness of the TEN-T core corridors depends on the timely and coordinated implementation of all national sections, as delays or fragmented implementation risk undermining the performance and competitiveness of the network as a whole; calls for the mandate of the European Coordinators of the TEN-T core network corridors to be strengthened and calls on the Commission to present a report, accompanied by a roadmap and a clear timeline, setting out the measures needed to remove the remaining barriers and reduce journey times;
29. Considers that Emissions Trading System (ETS) revenues should be mobilised to finance high-speed rail in line with national priorities, and to promote innovative financing mechanisms, such as green rail bonds, guarantees, blended finance, public-private partnerships and, where appropriate, the Regulated Asset Base model, the monetisation of avoided emissions and an electricity-crediting mechanism equivalent to the mechanism that exists for other modes of transport;
30. Calls on the Commission to assess how investment in high-speed infrastructure can facilitate the development of a European night train network and the integration of cross-border rail freight as complementary alternatives to other modes of transport;
31. Stresses that the maintenance and modernisation of existing rail infrastructure are as important as the construction of new lines, and encourages the Member States to ensure stable long-term funding for maintenance to provide investment certainty and reliable rail services; acknowledges, in this context, the importance of track access charges in contributing to the sustainable financing of rail infrastructure, noting that high-speed rail

services often face the highest charges in the sector and that Directive 2012/34/EU⁸ allows infrastructure managers to levy higher charges for major projects that would not otherwise be financially viable; stresses, however, that such financing arrangements must be carefully designed to avoid undermining the affordability and accessibility of rail services, and highlights the fact that track access charges must not undermine the competitiveness of rail vis-à-vis other modes of transport; calls for a balanced, transparent and predictable approach that provides long-term visibility on charging frameworks and access conditions, in order to encourage investment, strengthen cross-border connectivity, enable competition and innovative services, and improve infrastructure use, while keeping the network accessible and affordable for all passengers;

32. Recalls that the revised TEN-T Regulation sets binding ERTMS targets for the core (2030), extended core (2040) and comprehensive (2050) networks, and provides for the decommissioning of legacy signalling systems; stresses that the current pace of implementation and funding is insufficient to meet those targets; calls for accelerated delivery under the Third ERTMS Work Plan, with incentives for its execution, including realistic binding milestones – with penalties for missing them – for the decommissioning of Class B legacy signalling and CEF Transport funding conditionality from 2028, to incentivise a higher degree of rail standardisation;
33. Entrusts the ERA with technical oversight, the possibility of adopting EU-wide vehicle authorisation by 2027, the harmonised and coordinated deployment of ERTMS, and the progressive elimination of national technical and operational requirements that constitute a barrier for the development of an integrated and interoperable European rail network; calls for a strengthened and adequately resourced role for the ERA, so as to accelerate technical harmonisation, improve interoperability, reduce fragmentation and build capacity across Member States and stakeholders;
34. Calls for all EU-funded high-speed infrastructure projects located on the four priority military mobility corridors to enable and promote the dual use of the line, and invites the Commission to ensure that the military mobility envelope under the CEF is coordinated with TEN-T high-speed rail planning; considers that this dual-use approach should extend to strengthening the connectivity and capacity of railway hubs, including border regions of the EU, reinforcing both mobility and preparedness along strategic TEN-T corridors;
35. Highlights the potential of innovation and digitalisation – including digital twins and AI-based tools – to improve the performance, reliability and resilience of rail infrastructure; notes, in this context, the potential of the Future Railway Mobile Communication System to reduce signalling costs; welcomes the Commission's commitment to bridge the gap between research and market deployment by accelerating the uptake of harmonised European rail technologies, including automated train operations, next-generation ERTMS, digital communication and traffic management systems developed through Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking; calls for continued joint investment in rail research, innovation and deployment under the 2028-2034 Horizon Europe programme and the proposed European Competitiveness Fund, in partnership

⁸ Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 establishing a single European railway area (OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 32, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2012/34/oj>).

with the rail supply industry, infrastructure managers and railway operators, to enhance interoperability, productivity and the global competitiveness of the European rail sector;

36. Considers that climate resilience should be integrated as a core design and operational criterion, including climate stress-testing and climate adaptation requirements for EU-funded rail projects from 2027; calls for all rolling stock in service to be equipped with efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems by 2040;
37. Believes that Europe's high-speed rail competitiveness must be underpinned by the highest safety standards; stresses that the upcoming revision of the ERA Regulation should strengthen the ERA's role in supporting a safe, interoperable and trusted European rail system; notes that, unlike aviation and maritime transport, rail currently lacks a systematic EU-wide safety occurrence reporting framework that enables lessons to be learned from incidents and near misses; considers such a system essential to identify emerging risks at an early stage, support evidence-based policymaking and enable timely corrective action, while streamlining all reporting requirements, thereby maintaining public confidence in rail as a safe mode of transport;

IV. Europe's high-speed rail industry: building a competitive Europe

38. Calls for a green industrial strategy for high-speed rail anchored in the Clean Industrial Deal, supporting innovation, competitiveness, strategic autonomy and the resilience of the European rail supply industry and moving from fragmented markets to a globally competitive industrial base embedding criteria linked to sustainability, social concerns, the climate, decent work, EU export potential and the circular economy; stresses that the construction of the European high-speed rail network should serve as a major demand driver for European infrastructure companies, engineering firms, signalling and cybersecurity providers, manufacturers of critical components and rolling-stock producers; calls for the criteria for EU budgetary measures relating to high-speed rail to prioritise alternatives with higher European added value and economic resilience; calls for the full application of the Foreign Subsidies Regulation⁹, including its social safeguards, and other relevant EU instruments to safeguard a level playing field, in view of growing pressure from state-subsidised competitors from non-EU countries; calls for measures to strengthen the resilience and innovation capacity of the sector, including through transparent procurement procedures for rail infrastructure, rolling stock and digital systems, in this context;
39. Stresses that the lowest initial price should not be the sole determining factor in the award of contracts for strategic high-speed rail infrastructure; recommends that procurement decisions take into account total life-cycle costs, interoperability, operational resilience, safety, cybersecurity, and the economic and security value of maintaining European industrial capabilities, strategic knowledge and skilled employment; calls for procurement and financing frameworks that recognise European added value, industrial resilience, technological sovereignty and security of supply;
40. Calls on the Commission to conduct a dedicated risk assessment of the railway ecosystem, identify high-risk suppliers in critical infrastructure components, notably

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2022/2560 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market (OJ L 330, 23.12.2022, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2560/oj>).

signalling and control-command systems, including in dual-use rolling stock and strategic dual-use railway infrastructure, and develop a framework to strengthen the resilience and strategic autonomy of the European railway sector while preserving fair and open competition; calls for a thorough assessment of the cyber resilience of ERTMS;

41. Notes that the successful expansion of high-speed rail will depend on the availability of a sufficiently skilled workforce and on improving workforce mobility for both train drivers and on-board staff, while facilitating cross-border rail services and maintaining the highest safety standards; welcomes the work of the ERA on the development of technical specifications for a tamper-proof EU-wide system for monitoring driving, working and rest times, with a view to ensuring railway safety and compliance with social legislation, including for workers operating across multiple Member States or railway undertakings;
42. Supports the co-creation, under Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking, which should be prolonged under the 2028-2034 MFF, of harmonised multi-network trainsets with minimal national adaptation, and supports the progress of research and development that addresses the remaining interoperability gaps in infrastructure and provides scalable solutions supporting an at-scale European rail market, with a view to accelerating standardisation and reducing costs; calls for the ERA to be granted strengthened competence for EU-wide streamlined vehicle authorisations and safety certification procedures and the phasing-out of national technical rules and for its budget to be commensurately increased so that it can fulfil its tasks, while ensuring its procedures are kept transparent, effective and cost-efficient;
43. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the ERA, to explore appropriate mechanisms that can facilitate the adoption of common European railway standards by Member States facing particularly high infrastructure adaptation costs, including through transitional arrangements, implementation roadmaps and technical support measures, while safeguarding the objective of a fully interoperable European rail network; underlines that the ERA should work in coordination with the relevant Member State authorities, taking due account of technical and safety requirements justified by specific national networks;
44. Insists on the need to accelerate towards a harmonised set of operational rules and technical standards with a view to shifting to a single European railway area; calls for targeted measures to address barriers to entry in the rolling stock market, including acquisition guarantees with risk-sharing mechanisms, and for the establishment by 2027 of an EU framework for a transparent and competitive second-hand rolling stock market, supported by interoperable registries, harmonised standards and dedicated financing instruments that guarantee equal, fair market conditions and access for all railway operators, public or private, across all Member States;
45. Stresses that a genuinely European high-speed rail market depends on fair, transparent and non-discriminatory access to essential rail service facilities – such as maintenance depots, train storage facilities, ticket counters and passenger information displays – and to second-hand rolling stock, the current lack of which remains a major barrier to market entry, increases operating costs and reduces affordability for passengers; welcomes the Commission's commitment to revise the implementing regulation on

access to service facilities and rail-related services and to bring forward legislation on the reselling and decommissioning of rolling stock, with a view to strengthening the competitiveness of rail and the efficient use of railway infrastructure, while guaranteeing the highest standards of safety, compatibility and interoperability;

46. Calls on the Commission to regularly evaluate completed high-speed rail projects, including in terms of passenger demand, financial performance, environmental impact and regional economic effects, in order to improve future investment decisions;
47. Calls on the Commission to review Directive 2007/59/EC¹⁰ on the certification of train drivers with a view to removing unnecessary barriers to cross-border rail services through the harmonisation of training, certification and language requirements; calls for the deployment of innovative technologies, including AI-based communication and translation solutions, to facilitate seamless and uniform communication across borders, provided that such measures maintain the current level of railway safety; calls on the Commission to submit legislative proposals to this effect;
48. Welcomes the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2026/1184¹¹ on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area, which strengthens EU-harmonised coordination of capacity planning and allocation, improves the efficient use of rail infrastructure, reduces congestion and bottlenecks, and lays the foundation for more seamless, punctual and reliable international passenger and rail freight services, thereby supporting a shift towards rail; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure its swift and effective implementation;

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49. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

¹⁰ Directive 2007/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the certification of train drivers operating locomotives and trains on the railway system in the Community (OJ L 315, 3.12.2007, p. 51, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2007/59/oj>).

¹¹ Regulation (EU) 2026/1184 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2026 on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area, amending Directive 2012/34/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 (OJ L, 2026/1184, 10.6.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2026/1184/oj>).

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Context

The development of a European high-speed rail network serves several of the Union's central objectives at once: the cohesion of its territory, the competitiveness of its industry, the achievement of climate neutrality and the strengthening of its strategic autonomy. Rail is, moreover, the only mode able to advance these together, and the only one on which millions of Europeans already depend each day to reach work, education and care. The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy set the objective of doubling high-speed rail traffic by 2030 and tripling it by 2050, and the European Climate Law requires a substantial reduction of transport emissions by mid-century.

Progress has not matched these commitments. Between 2015 and 2023 high-speed rail traffic grew by only 17 %, and the network in operation remains concentrated in a limited number of Member States. As the European Court of Auditors has observed, what exists today functions less as an integrated European system than as a juxtaposition of national lines that tend to stop at borders, the cross-border sections and missing links remaining its principal weakness.

It is against this background that the Commission adopted, on 5 November 2025, its communication 'Connecting Europe through High-Speed Rail'. The rapporteur welcomes this communication as a substantive and timely roadmap towards completion of the network by 2040, and shares its central ambition. The present report is intended as a constructive contribution to that agenda: it endorses the direction set by the Commission while identifying four areas in which the Union's response would benefit from reinforcement — the absence of a binding modal-shift benchmark; the limited attention given to social and territorial safeguards; a financing response not yet commensurate with the EUR 345 billion the Commission estimates is needed to complete the network; and the persistent fragmentation of the internal market for rail, which holds back a strategic European industry.

Connecting regions, and not only capitals

The purpose of an investment of this scale is decisive for its legitimacy. A network conceived merely as a set of fast links between the largest cities risks reinforcing the concentration of activity in centres that are already dominant, drawing investment and opportunity towards them while passing over the territories its lines cross. Such an outcome would widen the very disparities that Union cohesion policy exists to narrow. The rapporteur considers that European high-speed rail must serve the opposite purpose: to support the everyday mobility of the workers, students and carers who form the great majority of rail users, and to strengthen the commuter and regional networks that carry the overwhelming share of journeys.

For this reason the report places the everyday network first. High-speed services should be conceived as a layer that feeds into and reinforces conventional, regional and suburban rail — never as a substitute for it, and never as a competitor for the funding on which it depends. The daily commuter network is, and must remain, the primary focus of European rail policy; high-speed rail earns its place by serving that network, not by eclipsing it. To give this principle effect, the report invites the Commission to adopt a planning criterion ensuring that the network serves all major urban areas of at least 250 000 inhabitants — a threshold that sector assessments also identify as the point at which a high-speed connection becomes economically viable. This criterion is proposed first and foremost as an instrument of

territorial cohesion: it widens the planning scope set out in the communication, so that access to the European core is treated as an entitlement of every region, including peripheral, outermost and currently under-connected ones. In the same spirit, the report invites the European Coordinators to give priority to restoring high-value cross-border links and to ensuring that high-speed stations operate as genuine intermodal nodes, enabling seamless door-to-door journeys.

A network that reaches every territory must also remain within reach of every traveller: a transition that ordinary citizens cannot afford is a privilege, not a transition. The report therefore treats affordability, accessibility and the fight against transport poverty as conditions of the network's social legitimacy.

Making modal shift real

Modal shift is at once a climate imperative, a lever of strategic autonomy and an economic opportunity. The rapporteur welcomes the ambition expressed in the communication, but considers that binding objectives are necessary if that ambition is to be realised, the experience of the past decade having shown the limits of targets that are merely indicative. The report likewise draws attention to the structural fiscal asymmetry between transport modes — rail bearing full energy taxation and value-added tax while aviation continues to benefit from longstanding exemptions — which distorts competition to the disadvantage of the cleaner mode and sits uneasily with the polluter-pays principle. It accordingly supports a progressive alignment, while remaining fully conscious that measures in the field of taxation require unanimity within the Council. Finally, the report recalls that modal shift will not occur unless rail is straightforward to use, and supports the swift adoption of the measures under negotiation on through-ticketing, passenger rights and multimodal booking.

Financing infrastructure as a public responsibility

The rapporteur welcomes the announced 2026 European High-Speed Rail Deal as the occasion to establish a financing architecture commensurate with the investment gap. The report proceeds from a clear premise: high-speed infrastructure is a strategic public asset, and its construction, ownership and maintenance are a lasting public responsibility. It should therefore be financed predominantly through European and national public investment and through earmarked revenues from the Emissions Trading System, rather than through arrangements that defer cost rather than reduce it. Such investment must, moreover, be distributed in a territorially balanced manner, giving priority to closing the implementation gaps that have left parts of the network — and entire regions — unbuilt or long delayed.

On this point the report is deliberately cautious. It does not regard Public-Private Partnerships, Regulated Asset Base models or comparable scheme-based mechanisms as a sound basis for financing core infrastructure. Independent assessments have repeatedly questioned whether such arrangements deliver value for public money in large transport projects; characteristically, they transfer long-term cost and risk back to the public balance sheet, or recover it through higher track-access charges that fall ultimately on passengers and on the very conventional and regional services that share the network. Any role for private capital should accordingly be confined to the procurement of rolling stock, where it does not encumber the public ownership of the infrastructure itself. The report further makes climate resilience a binding criterion for EU-funded projects, in response to the repeated and costly damage that extreme weather has inflicted on rail infrastructure in recent years.

A competitive European industry

The persistent fragmentation of national signalling, gauge and certification rules raises costs and weakens a strategic European sector. The report therefore supports a green industrial strategy anchored in the Clean Industrial Deal, the consistent application of the Foreign Subsidies Regulation to safeguard a level playing field, a reinforced role for the European Union Agency for Railways in interoperability and vehicle authorisation, and the establishment of a European market for second-hand rolling stock that would lower barriers to entry for regional operators and new entrants. The difficulty in this field arises less from any single external competitor than from the Union's own internal fragmentation; where others have shown what coordinated public planning and industrial policy can achieve, Europe's task is to summon the same resolve rather than retreat behind separate national markets.

Relationship with the Commission and the Council

The report is consistent with, and builds upon, the established framework of Union transport and climate policy — the revised TEN-T Regulation, the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and the European Climate Law. With regard to the Council, the rapporteur is mindful of the sensitivities attaching to taxation, to the respective competences of the Union and the Member States, and to budgetary commitments, and has framed the report's requests as gradual, evidence-based and respectful of those competences. The rapporteur recalls, nonetheless, that a network which is European by its very nature — every route upon it crossing at least one border — calls for a correspondingly European framework for its planning, financing and authorisation.

Conclusion

The Union has been built upon shared rules, a common currency and open borders; its completion by rail is the logical next step, provided that the network reaches every territory, serves the people who travel each day, and remains affordable to those who depend upon it. The investment required is significant, but modest beside the recurring cost of inaction — continued dependence on imported fossil fuels and the mounting cost of climate-related damage. The report sets out how the Union may move from the Commission's roadmap to the binding commitments needed to deliver a high-speed rail network that is genuinely European, socially just and industrially robust.

ANNEX: DECLARATION OF INPUT

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that he included in his report input on matters pertaining to the subject of the file that he received, in the preparation of the report, from the following interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register¹, or from the following representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies:

1. Interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register
ALLRAIL Alliance of Rail New Entrants
Bentley Systems, Incorporated
CER - Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies
Deutsche Bahn AG
ECF - European Cyclists' Federation
EESC - European Economic and Social Committee
ETF - European Transport Workers' Federation
Eurocities
Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane S.p.A
SNCF
Transport and Environment
UITP - International Association of Public Transport
UNIFE - The European Rail Supply Industry Association
2. Representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies
None

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the rapporteur declares that he has submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement of May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register (OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1, ELI:http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_interinst/2021/611/oj).

**INFORMATION ON ADOPTION
IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE**

Date adopted	5.10.2026		
Result of final vote	+	:	34
	-	:	0
	0	:	7

**FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL
BY THE COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE**

34	+
ECR	Teodorescu Georgiana, Wąsik Maciej, Złotowski Kosma
NI	Lazarus Luis-Vicențiu
PPE	Bugalho Sebastião, Carberry Nina, Falcă Gheorghe, Gieseke Jens, Joński Dariusz, Koning Willemien, López-Istúriz White Antonio, Mehnert Alexandra, Niedermayer Luděk, Vozemberg-Vrionidi Elissavet, Winzig Angelika
PfE	Haider Roman, Leonardelli Julien, Olivier Philippe
Renew	Cassart Benoit, Christensen Asger, Devaux Valérie, Oetjen Jan-Christoph, Šarec Marjan
S&D	Costanzo Vivien, Danielsson Johan, Gonçalves Sérgio, Kalfon François, Mușoiu Ștefan, Ricci Matteo, Schieder Andreas, Serrano Sierra Rosa
Verts/ALE	Marzà Ibáñez Vicent, Sinkevičius Virginijus, Tegethoff Kai

0	-
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7	0
ESN	Mazurek Milan, Schnurrbusch Volker, Stoyanov Stanislav
PfE	Blom Rachel
The Left	Kennes Rudi, Kyllönen Merja, Saeidi Arash

Key:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstentions