Connecting Europe through high-speed rail

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The European Parliament adopted by 558 votes to 23, with 73 abstentions, a resolution on connecting Europe through high-speed rail.

Connecting Europe: people, regions and capitals

Parliament called 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**. 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.

Parliament called 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, to ensure that the network's expansion contributes to territorial cohesion.

The Commission is invited to map areas not currently covered by high-speed rail networks and to prioritise 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.

Members called on the Commission and the Council to structure the **2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** in such a way as to ensure adequate and specific funding for the development of the high-speed network, and to make full use of existing and future Union funds and financing instruments as well as existing and future guarantees from the European Investment Bank to ensure inclusive and fair access to rail transport, including high-speed services, for all regions and all citizens.

Deliver the modal shift

The resolution emphasised that a modal shift towards high-speed rail will contribute to the EU's **decarbonisation and connectivity objectives** and will constitute a strategic-autonomy lever as well as an economic opportunity that enhances competitiveness and reduces dependence on imported fossil fuels. The modal shift should be based on transforming rail into a genuinely competitive and attractive alternative to other modes of transport and on the effective enforcement of passenger rights.

Members supported the 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.

Parliament welcomed the ongoing legislative work on the **Passengers Package**. It expects this package to deliver interoperable, visible, accessible, and easily comparable train ticket offers, as well as a legally enforceable guarantee of onward travel in the event of missed connections involving multiple rail operators.

Members encouraged Member States and rail undertakings to **make high-speed rail tickets more affordable**, notably through accessible fares and appropriate reduced fare or subscription schemes. They called for greater transparency in ticket pricing.

Investing in high-speed rail infrastructure

Parliament called for a European **rail industrial strategy** to coordinate how the EU builds, signals and operates its network, avoiding fragmentation. It stressed the need to preserve and strengthen the **Connecting Europe Facility** (CEF) as a 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.

The Commission and the Council are urged 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. Members have called for the removal of cross-border bottlenecks and the full implementation of TEN-T commitments to be key priorities in EU funding for high-speed rail transport.

The resolution emphasised the importance of:

- mobilising revenues from the **emissions trading system** (ETS) to finance high-speed rail transport;

- ensuring stable long-term funding for **the maintenance and modernisation** of existing railway infrastructure in order to ensure investment certainty and the reliability of railway services;

- bridging the 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.

Europe's high-speed rail industry

Parliament called 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.

The resolution stressed that the **lowest initial price** should not be the sole determining factor in the award of contracts for strategic high-speed rail infrastructure. It recommended 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.