

OPEN LETTER

Business travellers and environmental organisations across Europe call upon German government and political decision makers to ramp up rail

21. November 2024

Deputy Parliamentary Chairpersons,

Distinguished Members of the Budget and Transport Committees of the Bundestag,

As representatives of businesses, business travellers and environmental civil society organisations across Europe, we are alarmed at the state of the rail system's reliability and are writing to you regarding Germany's transport infrastructure financing in the transition to a new government. We are concerned that Germany might not invest what is necessary to rehabilitate, modernise and expand its rail network.

We want to reduce our climate footprint as business travellers. We are willing to take the train instead of the plane. Rail is 7.7 times more climate-friendly than aviation in national connections¹. However, reliability is key for business travellers and in 2024, the year of the UEFA European Championship, so far less than two thirds of Deutsche Bahn's trains were on time in long-distance transport.² The rail system has a lot to catch up on if it is to offer business travellers reliable options. It is the government's responsibility to invest appropriately in the network, as rail transport companies rely on solid infrastructure with sufficient capacity. The goals remain: a well-maintained, digitalised rail network connecting Germany's cities and regions with Europe; a rapid and decisive acceleration of the next stages in the nationwide synchronised timetable 'Deutschlandtakt'; and twice as many rail passengers by 2030.

To set the course now, we, European businesses, business travellers and environmental organisations call on the current and next German government:

- to provide sufficient funds for the modernisation, digitalisation and expansion of the rail network in the 2025 and 2026 federal budgets,
- to simplify and secure rail funding for the long term by implementing a multi-year rolling rail fund, and
- to ensure that rail tolls are significantly reduced, not increased.

Shifting funding to the rail network for maintenance, digitalisation and expansion is key to increasing rail capacity and reliability. A multi-year rolling rail fund accelerates construction, as it gives developers, authorities and the railway sector certainty when hiring staff and procuring machinery. Reducing track access charges as intended by the last government – in the short term through a corresponding track access compensation – will make rail more competitive for travellers and goods.

Booking cross-border rail trips must be as easy as booking flights. Therefore, we call upon you to actively support the initiative of the European Commission president for

¹ Rail is almost up to eight times more climate-friendly than aviation in national connections, up to 28 times in global comparison. Umweltbundesamt, 2022, [Comparison of emissions](#) (last access: 19 November 2024). See also Juri Maier, Back on Track e.V., 2022, [The Global Warming Reduction Potential of Night Trains](#) p. 6 (accessed 19 November 2024)

² Cancelled trains not included. Deutsche Bahn AG, 2024, [Konzern-Zwischenlagebericht \(ungeprüft\) 2024](#) (accessed 19 November 2024)

simplified, fair and non-discriminatory access to rail ticketing for companies and citizens.

Shifting more air and road travel and transport to rail will relieve skies and roads, especially from heavy goods transport and transit. It will enable the European Union, Germany and its businesses to achieve climate goals. Set the course right, so that Germany's railways become fit for future challenges and inspire even more people to travel by train.

Yours sincerely,



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