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Innovation, Mobility
and Infrastructure
Republic of Austria

Ministry of Infrastructure
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Transport ministers of the June 2020 Ministerial Declaration on International Railway Passenger Transport
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1

Copy: Josef Doppelbauer chairs sector delivery group

Date 29 May 2026
Subject 6th IRP progress report

Dear colleagues,

International rail passenger transport is essential to achieving Europe's climate, competitiveness and connectivity objectives. In 2020, 27 ministers adopted the Ministerial Declaration on International Railway Passenger Transport and established the Platform on International Rail Passenger Transport (IRP). This sixth Integrated Progress Report presents developments in 2025–2026 and outlines the way forward.

The report confirms that the volume and diversity of international rail passenger services continue to grow. The 2026 monitor showed an increase up to 22.5% in cross-border service connections, increases were noted in all types of services (high-speed, regional, night and Intercity trains). New night trains, high-speed as well as Intercity connections and operators are entering the market. The report highlights case studies throughout the European Union and beyond where railway undertakings prepare for more international services and where infrastructure managers and Member States work together on the framework conditions to allow further growth. In addition, there are strong indications that investments in cross border passenger rolling stock are rising, both by incumbent railway undertakings as well as new privately owned railway undertakings. Cross-border infrastructure, interoperable capacity and coordinated planning are a key requirement in this regard.

At the same time, international services still lag behind comparable domestic services in terms of frequency, speed, capacity and reliability. The IRP has therefore continued to focus on addressing practical bottlenecks and on providing a forum for Member States and sector stakeholders to exchange experiences and support bilateral and multilateral initiatives. In 2025–2026, the platform organised several meetings on services and corridors, infrastructure networks, passenger experience and ticketing, rolling stock and capacity allocation, as well as on the future of the platform and market monitoring. In this context, the legislative package of the European Commission on the digital single market for rail ticketing, presented on 13 May 2026, is therefore a crucial step.

Recognising the persistent challenges, IRP members decided to prolong their cooperation and adopted renewed Terms of Reference on 7 November 2025. In this sixth report, the IRP places particular emphasis on market monitoring and on four priority issues: ticketing, rolling stock, capacity allocation and corridors. A key

recommendation is the development of a 2040 cross border target network/timetable for international rail passenger services. Several Member States are already developing such networks domestically. A comparable vision at the level of the IRP platform may help to identify infrastructure bottlenecks to accommodate such service level to support the coordination for the long term strategic guidance for rail.

The 6th progress report also contains a non-binding procedure for Member States for coordinating their strategic guidance for capacity allocations, in line with the forthcoming EU regulation on railway capacity based on COM(2023)443. The preparation of this procedure is important for international rail passengers and freight transport given the need to finalise coordination by 31 October 2027 at the latest. Member States participating in the network of executive boards (chaired by the colleagues of Luxembourg and Austria) of the EU rail freight corridors and the Member States participating in the platform International Rail Passengers prepared together on this procedure.

We do highly welcome the renewed mandate and extended membership of the sector delivery group and look forward to work with the SDG to deliver tangible results for international rail passengers.

In 2027, the IRP also aims to deliver a methodology for developing a 2040 cross-border target network, in close cooperation with the European Commission, the EU rail innovation vehicle, the EU Agency for Railways and sector organisations such as RailNetEurope and Forum Train Europe. Such target network of international rail passenger services can be seen as complementary action to the European plan on high speed rail services COM(2025)903.

Building on the progress achieved so far, the IRP members remain committed to working closely with all relevant European institutions and stakeholders to further improve international rail passenger services and to make rail an increasingly attractive, reliable and competitive choice for passengers across Europe.

Yours sincerely,

the Environment and Public transport (Netherlands),

Bescherming persoonlijke levenssfeer

Annet Bertram

Federal Minis y and Infrastructure (Republic of Austria),

Peter Hanke