

# Rail Transport



## ***RAIL TRANSPORT TODAY***

Efficient, clean, safe and affordable land transport is one of the key policy objectives of UNECE member States in the drive towards ensuring a sustainable transport system. Railways have a central role in contributing to this objective.

Rail freight services play an important role in the production, trade, and distribution of bulk materials. Over appropriate distances railways also provide efficient and effective transport alternatives for freight that is usually transported by sea (for containers) and by air (for higher value items).

Railways also perform a valuable economic and social role in transporting passengers in dense intercity corridors, in major cities, and over long distances included in rural regions. The growth of high-speed rail across the ECE region has further cemented this key role and facilitated capturing passengers from road and aviation, significantly reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.



## Regulating and Promoting Rail Transport

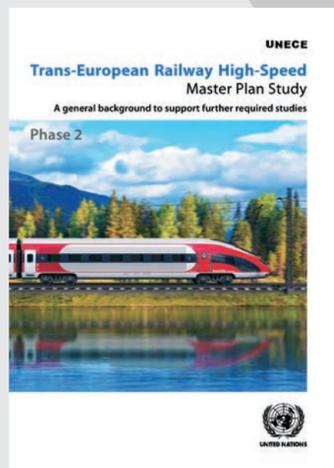
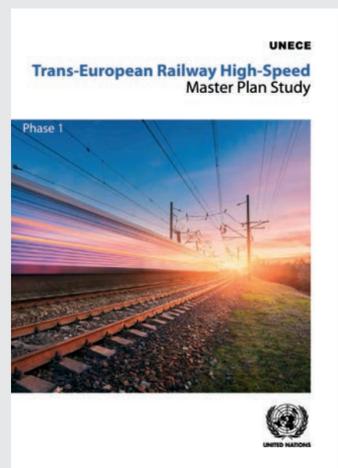
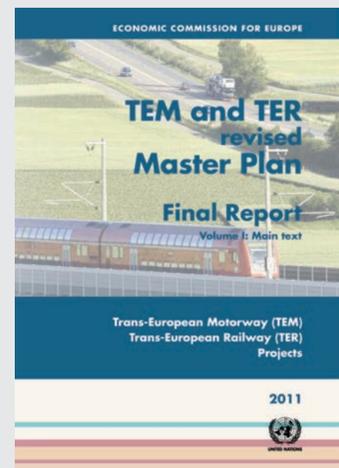
UNECE has been involved in the regulation and promotion of rail transport since its creation in the post war period. The Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) and its experts groups provide since 1951 a pan-European forum for exchange of technical, legal and policy information and best practices in international rail transport in order to promote rail transport in UNECE member States and to ensure its economic efficiency and environmental sustainability.

The Working Party brings together rail transport experts from UNECE governments, the European Commission, intergovernmental organizations and projects, non-governmental organizations as well as invited researchers. Through the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2), member States have elaborated legal agreements, initiated key regulations and developed policy solutions to further the development of the sector.

## International projects

In order to promote international rail transport, in particular, in Central, Eastern and South-eastern European countries, the Trans-European Railway (TER) Project was established in 1990 as a sub-regional cooperation among Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries. Its objectives are to improve the quality and efficiency of transport operations, to assist the integration process of European transport infrastructure systems, and to develop a coherent and efficient international railway and combined transport system in accordance with the UNECE Pan-European infrastructure agreements mentioned previously. A number of key outputs have been delivered for this project recently, including two phases of the TER High-Speed Masterplan.

The significant increase in trade between Europe and Asia, as well as the completion of important rail infrastructure projects has put rail transport at the centre of freight movements along Euro-Asian transport corridors. The Euro-Asian transport links (EATL) project has identified main rail routes for priority development and cooperation and is assisting member States to develop also interregional rail transport linkages and to facilitate thereby interregional trade and tourism. Test runs of trains on EATL have shown that rail is a possible option for Euro-Asian freight transport, being twice as fast as maritime transport and considerably cheaper than air freight.



## Legal instruments

The European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) provides the legal and technical framework for the development of a coherent and efficient international rail network in the ECE region. The AGC identifies railway lines of major international importance, the E-rail network, and their technical characteristics as a basis for further development of the European railway infrastructure through the definition of a set of infrastructure parameters for freight and passenger services.

In order to provide for efficient and seamless international transport, common conditions governing international transport have been developed during the last 50 years and are now applicable at regional and global levels for all modes of transport, except for rail transport. To address this imbalance, UNECE member States are also finalizing work on the creation of Unified Railway Law. This law will bring together the two systems of CIM and SMGS to provide one legal regime, one contract of carriage and one liability regime to breakdown one of the most important administrative barriers that hinders the further development of the rail sector.

To assist in providing appropriate funding for new railway rolling stock, UNECE member States are working on the development of a new permanent identification of railway rolling stock system to implement the requirements of the Luxembourg Protocol to the Cape Town Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment.

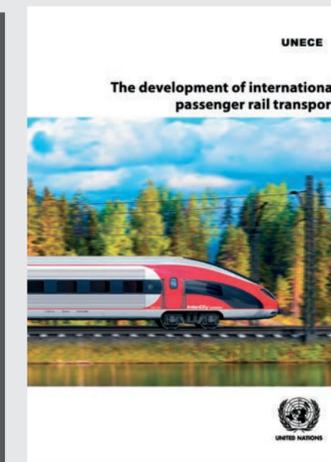
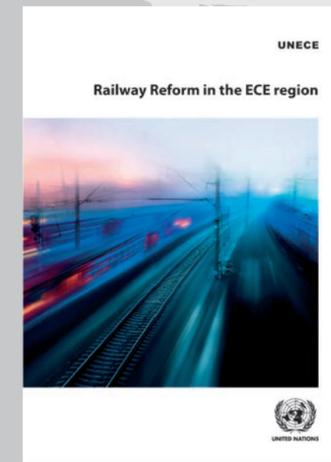
Considering the importance of encouraging more passengers onto the rail network and recognizing the key role that the railways can and do play in international passenger travel, UNECE member States have initiated work on the development of a legal instrument on International Railway Passenger Hubs with the aim of making transiting through important railway stations easier and more attractive.



UNECE also administers a further 12 Conventions and legal agreements that are directly related to rail.

## Policy solutions

The work of SC.2 also focuses extensively on development of policy initiatives and solutions to help make the rail sector more competitive. These have been developed through conclusions reached at dedicated workshops on such topics as innovation, connectivity, freight competitiveness and international passenger transport by rail.



These policy solutions are supported by targeted tools aimed at assisting member States and the railway industry as a whole to grow including the Rail Security Observatory, the Innovation Platform, Productivity Indicators and the AGC/AGTC key infrastructure parameters tool.

The AGC network is also the basis for the E-rail census which is undertaken every 5 years providing transport planners and policy makers with an overall view of international rail traffic flows.



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## HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

The sessions of the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) and its experts groups are open to all UNECE and other United Nations member States, competent international organizations as well as invited experts.

For more information, contact the UNECE secretariat.

Further information on this and much more is available at:  
<https://unece.org/transport/rail-transport>

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