

Communiqué from the Conference Horizons of Railway Transport 2025

Jasná, 7–9 October 2025

From 7 to 9 October 2025, the **13th International Scientific Conference Horizons of Railway Transport** was held in Jasná, organised by the **University of Žilina**, Faculty of Operation and Economics of Transport and Communications, in cooperation with the **Association of Railway Transport Operators of Slovakia (AROS)** and with the support of key partners from the railway sector, including **METRANS**, **Railway Transport International (RTI)**, the **Railways of the Slovak Republic (ŽSR)**, and representatives of state authorities.

The conference brought together **147 experts from nine European countries** – Germany, France, Belgium, Poland, Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. This international scope confirms that the Slovak railway sector is becoming an active part of the European space for **science, innovation, and interoperability**.

The main theme of the conference was **Automation and Digitalisation in the Context of Railway System Interoperability**. Participants discussed current challenges in the railway sector and agreed that both the EU and Slovakia stand at a decisive point — the railways can become a **pillar of sustainable mobility in Europe**, or risk falling behind global trends.

Recommendations and Conclusions of the Conference

1. Stable and Multi-Source Financing of Railways

Slovakia needs a long-term, predictable, and efficient system of financing railway infrastructure that does not rely exclusively on EU funds. Participants recommend adopting the forthcoming **Act on National Transport Infrastructure**, which should create a framework for stable and transparent financing. A key priority is to complete the modernisation of main corridors by **2040** and to actively engage in the development of **high-speed rail (HSR)** as part of the **TEN-T European transport network**.

2. Digitalisation and Automation as a Priority

The modernisation of railways must be based on the implementation of **European technological standards**, including the **European Train Control System (ETCS)**, **digital twins of infrastructure**, and **digital automatic coupling (DAC)**. Slovakia should launch pilot digitalisation projects while coordinating these steps with neighbouring countries. The financing of these projects must be designed in a way that does not reduce the competitiveness of railway undertakings, while strengthening the **legislative framework for cybersecurity and interoperability**.

3. Support for Human Capital and Generation Z

The development of the railway sector requires investments in people as much as in infrastructure. It is recommended to expand **dual education programmes, internships,**

and university–industry cooperation, allowing young professionals to participate in innovative projects already during their studies. Increasing the attractiveness of railway professions, systematically developing competences, and opening space for innovation driven by **Generation Z** are essential for the sector's long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

The **Horizons of Railway Transport 2025** conference reaffirmed that rail transport plays a crucial role in achieving **ecological, safe, and competitive mobility in Europe**. Slovakia now faces strategic decisions that will determine its position within the European railway network.

Conference participants call upon the **state authorities, infrastructure manager, railway undertakings, industry representatives, and the academic community** to work together to fulfil these objectives. The ambition of Slovakia should be to become a **leader in railway digitalisation, interoperability, and human capital development** within Central Europe.