European Rail Infrastructure Managers EIM

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EIM Statement

Financing fire-resilient rail infrastructure: prevention cannot wait

Wildfires are sweeping across southwestern Europe, driven by record heat and forcing more than 325,000 people from their homes in France and Spain, with authorities warning against rail travel in the affected regions[1]. As of 22 July 2026, more than 321,000 hectares have already burned across the European Union, more than double the usual number of fires for this time of year.[2] And the peak of the season is still to come.

Fire hits Europe's railways directly. In recent weeks, infrastructure managers in several countries have had to suspend services as flames reached their lines.[3]

EIM, the association of European Rail Infrastructure Managers, has already made the case for flood risks in its March 2026 Position Paper on investing in climate-resilient rail infrastructure under the next MFF[4]; the wildfires now sweeping France, Spain Italy and other European countries show that the same argument applies, with equal force, to fire.

Wildfires are, first and foremost, a human, environmental and social tragedy. They are also a direct threat to rail transport. A rail line lost to fire is never only a repair bill: it severs supply chains, forces freight back onto congested roads, drives up emissions, and erodes market competitiveness.

EIM recalls a simple truth: rail is critical infrastructure that must be protected *before* disaster strikes, not rebuilt after it. EIM urges Europe's decision-makers to invest in resilience of rail as critical infrastructure *before* the next fire.

EIM therefore reiterates its call on the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission to make climate adaptation of rail infrastructure — including protection against wildfire — a dedicated funding priority in the next Multiannual Financial Framework. EIM stands ready to work with the EU institutions and Member States to make Europe's railways fire resilient.

Prevention costs a fraction of reconstruction; and the logic of resilience is the same for whichever hazard strikes: €1 invested in wildfire prevention saves an estimated €4–€7 in potential future damage.[5]

Yet the financial commitment still does not match this political ambition.

About EIM

EIM, the association of European Rail Infrastructure Managers, was established in 2002 to promote the interests and views of the independent infrastructure managers in Europe, following the liberalisation of the EU railway market. It also provides technical expertise to the appropriate European bodies such as the European Union Agency for Railways. EIM's primary goal is promoting the growth of rail traffic and the development of an open, sustainable, efficient, customer-oriented rail network in Europe. For further information, please consult www.eimrail.org.

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1 More than 325,000 people were evacuated in France and Spain in July 2026; the Gironde fires prompted France's largest evacuation since WW II, and authorities warned against road and rail travel in affected areas (Al Jazeera, CNN, July 2026).

2 EFFIS / Copernicus: estimation updated on 22 July 2026 https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/projects-and-activities/natural-and-man-made-hazards/forest-fires/current-wildfire-situation-europe_en

3 In July 2026, ADIF suspended a section of the Madrid–Barcelona high-speed line when flames came within roughly 1 km of the tracks: https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/y0coe0wu9cw4/ . Wildfires interrupted the Paris–Lyon high-speed axis and disrupted services in the Gironde around Bordeaux: https://almouwatin.com/2026/07/13/comptez-un-retard-pouvant-aller-jusqua-3h40-un-nouvel-incendie-perturbe-le-trafic-sncf-sur-la-lgv-sud-est/

4 https://eimrail.org/2026/03/23/investing-in-climate-resilient-rail-infrastructure-under-the-next-eu-mff-the-cost-of-inaction-is-no-longer-affordable/

5 The World Bank, 2021. Economics for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness: Investment in Disaster Risk Management in Europe Makes Economic Sense. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/873811622437677342/pdf/Summary-Report.pdf