

FEDECRAIL ANNUAL PLAN 2025

Introduction.

FEDECRAIL 2025 places the needs and challenges of its members at the centre of all it does. Through increased dialogue, enhanced support, and greater visibility for the work of our member organizations, we are creating a sustainable and vibrant future for the heritage of rail-bound transport. Together, we ensure that these valuable resources are preserved and developed for the enjoyment of future generations. A significant initiative for the year is the rollout of the Bronze Award level of the Youth Upskill Program, engaging Young Volunteers (16–25) to complete 50 hours of service across three disciplines, complemented by relevant training. This program aims to develop a versatile and skilled younger generation of practitioners while offering educational and career-building opportunities. Host organizations benefit from a kitemark for their commitment to youth development, strengthening the sector's future.

The 2025 annual plan will also be reflected in the budget. It is of utmost importance that our ambitions are supported by the necessary financial resources, ensuring that we build our activities based on the economic framework available.

This annual plan of FEDECRAIL for the year 2025 is based on:

The Strategic plan 2023 – 2028 (Accepted by the members during AGM on 23.04.2023)

FEDECRAIL adopted the SMART framework in our 2023–2028 strategic plan to ensure that our goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. This approach enhances focus and accountability, allowing us to implement targeted actions, track progress effectively, and stay aligned with our mission to support and sustain heritage rail sector. A SMART-aligned annual plan is essential to achieving meaningful outcomes and delivering real value to our members.

The main directions for 2025.

Enhanced Member Collaboration: FEDECRAIL will prioritize member support with regular engagement and responsive services, focusing on heritage rail sector and tramway preservation.

Practical Support Services: We will provide guidance, expert networks, and resources for legislation and safety to support daily member operations.

Direct Support for Key Challenges: Addressing top issues like maintenance, safety, and best practices, we aim to strengthen the sustainability of member projects.

Increased Visibility: We will continue to support our existing members, we will also work to raise awareness of their heritage contributions, but also striving to increase the member numbers particularly in the Eastern Europe.

Knowledge Sharing and Networking: We remain committed to supporting our members in addressing their challenges and creating opportunities to enhance their competence. By organizing workshops, training sessions, and collaborative initiatives, we aim to provide practical solutions, encourage knowledge exchange, and foster partnerships with likeminded organizations to advance our collective goals. Networking with key organizations for example such as Europa Nostra, International Council on monuments and sites (ICOMOS), The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH), and International Association of Transport and Communications Museum (IATM) is essential to strengthening our collective efforts, sharing expertise, and aligning our work with broader initiatives in cultural heritage preservation and management.

Internal affairs in 2025 board

FEDECRAIL's work centers on supporting and growing our community of heritage rail sector organizations across Europe. Key initiatives include expanding our membership base, especially in Eastern Europe, to enrich diversity and strengthen collaboration. In solidarity with Ukraine, we actively engage Eastern European heritage rail sector groups to foster resilience and unity.

We prioritize equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) by developing adaptable policies that member organizations can adopt. During 2025, FEDECRAIL will develop a comprehensive Code of Conduct, emphasizing equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) while ensuring alignment with EU legislation and international standards. This initiative will provide adaptable policies for member organizations, fostering ethical governance and inclusivity. We anticipate that this effort will have a positive and lasting impact on our community and strengthen our position within the heritage rail sector sector.

To build future engagement, we are launching a youth initiative with programs like Erasmus to encourage cross-border exchanges. Additionally, we seek financial support for an administrative office to enhance member services. Our commitment to diverse member engagement ensures that activities are tailored to meet the wide-ranging interests of our community, reflecting FEDECRAIL's mission to preserve Europe's rail-based cultural heritage.

Finance 2025

2024 has been a tough year in many respects with ongoing economic uncertainty, wars prevailing in the Ukraine and Middle East, and continued high inflation with some of the greatest increases seen in fuel supply. Growth rates (GDP) were revised down to 0.8% in the EU and EU Area with inflation set to decrease from ca. 6% in 2023 to ca. 3% in 2024.

Against this global backdrop, heritage rail sector businesses still have other factors to contend with such as the weather and local recruitment of both skilled staff and volunteers which impact greatly on the financial outturn. Scrutiny of trends in the management accounts can only be encouraged as it is through these figures we see how each passenger is spending their hard-earned cash, or not.

Another trend witnessed both in Europe and the North America is a pattern of late bookings, even later than seen in 2023, which makes planning and the question of whether or when to discount a real headache. Being able to react & respond quickly to these trends is part of the day to day running of any business.

Despite inflation slowly coming down, prices have not, and they continue to rise at a rate of 2.5-3% as predicted for the next quarter. Not increasing ticket prices each year in line with inflation means, we are standing still, or worse we are taking a cut in revenue. For example, if you had held your fares at EU 10 in

2023, it would be worth just over EU 9.40 in 2024, a loss of 60 cents per passenger in real terms and if you multiply that by e.g. 30,000 paying visitors, that's a lot of cash!

Aligned with this is public perception. What does it cost for a family day out to a theme park, zoo, museum, or castle? No doubt it's a lot more than a day out at a heritage rail sectorway and therefore we should not feel embarrassed or reticent about putting up our prices. On the other hand, if prices are too low, we are not valuing or maximising our potential. Would you not be a bit sceptical if you saw a steak dinner at a top restaurant on sale for just EU10? What does a nice coffee at a Starbucks cost, no one seems to baulk at paying these prices though. We strive to offer a high-quality product, a memorable day out for the whole family and something visitors will have a reason to return to in the future, therefore we must not undervalue it through our pricing.

As laid out in the Annual Plan for 2025, FEDECRAIL has an ambitious agenda supplemented by relevant fund-raising applications in specific areas, thus adhering to the above points, and the cost of achieving our projects, has no alternative but to raise its membership fees by ca. 5% across all categories. Mindful of delivering a membership focussed plan, we are convinced that this not only offers value for money but also keeps heritage rail sector attractions high on everyone's agenda. Suggested fee is 12,5 euro/point and minimum fee 80 euros.

Economical Reserves fund

FEDECRAIL is establishing a reserve fund to ensure financial stability and support long-term objectives. This fund will provide a buffer for unexpected emergencies, short-term cash flow gaps, or urgent projects requiring matched funding.

The reserve level will be carefully assessed based on potential risks and operational needs, with annual reviews to ensure alignment with targets. Adjustments will be transparently addressed in our annual report, demonstrating FEDECRAIL's commitment to sound financial management and sustained member support.

Commercial and Trade memberships

Establishing a New Membership Structure to Boost Revenue without voting rights.

FEDECRAIL's membership program for Commercial and Trade Associates supports businesses and non-profits contributing to the heritage rail sector while strengthening the organisation's mission.

FEDECRAIL introduces a restructured membership model to increase engagement and income, featuring:

Commercial Partnerships

For businesses providing products or services to the heritage rail sector, such as track suppliers, technical consultants, event planners, manufacturers, etc.

Key Benefits:

- Visibility through FEDECRAIL's publications, website, and promotional materials.
- Access to networking events like the AGM, with opportunities for presentations and product showcases.
- Exclusive rights to sponsor events and gain recognition in promotional campaigns.

Trade Associates

For non-profits and institutions supporting rail heritage, including educational organisations and cultural associations.

Key Benefits:

- Participation in webinars, advisory groups, and conferences.
- Collaboration on regulatory and preservation initiatives.
- Inclusion in FEDECRAIL's online directory and ability to share updates in the newsletter.

Benefits for Non-Voting Members overall:

- Increased visibility through FEDECRAIL's publications, website, and events.
- Access to webinars, advisory groups, and sector-specific conferences.
- Use of the FEDECRAIL logo for enhanced credibility.
- Opportunities for event sponsorship and collaboration within the heritage preservation network.

This structure strengthens partnerships, supports FEDECRAIL's mission, and promotes sustainable growth in preserving Europe's rail heritage.

Strategy for Heritage rail sector within EU

FEDECRAIL actively works to strengthen and safeguard Europe's mobile rail heritage sector by engaging with decision-makers and key organizations. As a representative within ERA, we advocate for the preservation of this cultural asset, focusing on more than just technical aspects like ERTMS. Our mission centers on preserving and supporting heritage rail sector and tramways as integral parts of Europe's history, education, and sustainable tourism.

Through dialogue with the EU Commission and Parliament, we propose targeted measures for tailored regulations that respect the unique character of heritage rail sectorways and tramways. Our aim is to ensure this sector receives the adapted legislation needed to preserve its cultural, historical, and socio-economic value for future generations.

Define Core Message: Emphasize heritage rail sector as a pillar of European culture, a local economic driver, and a model for sustainable tourism.

Build Alliances: Partner with heritage organizations, tourism boards, other organizations of interests and similar challenges and cultural ministries for a united front.

Engage Stakeholders with Experiences: Host meetings and heritage rail sector events for ERA and EU officials, showcasing the value of heritage rail sector firsthand.

Run Public Campaigns: Use media and social channels to build public support, highlighting heritage rail sector's cultural and economic impact.

Provide Data-Backed Arguments: Use statistics and case studies to make a strong case for regulatory flexibility and EU support.

This approach keeps heritage rail sector sector in the spotlight, pushing for balanced policies that enable sustainable growth.

Communication Strategy and Goals

Focus on increasing awareness of FEDECRAIL's efforts in preserving and promoting rail heritage sector, fostering engagement among members and partners, and encouraging international collaboration. The strategy includes the Update newsletter, Microsoft Teams, the website, and social media. FEDECRAIL will build on the progress made in 2024 by continuing to prioritize effective communication through social media and digital platforms. Our expanded presence on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and

YouTube has proven invaluable for sharing updates, engaging with members, and showcasing the heritage rail sector to a wider audience.

Key Points to Enhance FEDECRAIL's Visibility:

1. Engaging Content in Update:

- Create captivating articles that highlight projects, member stories, and successful collaborations.
- Include updates from various regions, especially Eastern Europe, to showcase FEDECRAIL's global presence.

2. Teams as an Interactive Knowledge Platform:

- Host regular digital workshops and Q&A sessions via Teams to engage members.
- Create topic-specific groups in Teams where members can share ideas, seek advice, and discuss projects, enhancing a sense of community.

3. Website as a Resource Hub:

- Enrich the website with upcoming events, training sessions, and project highlights.
- Add a section with "Resources for Heritage rail sectorways" to establish the site as a go-to information source.

4. Social Media for Wider Reach:

- Utilize visual content (e.g., photos and videos) showcasing unique railway heritage and FEDECRAIL's initiatives.
- Post "Meet Our Members" features to humanize the organization and create a personal connection.
- Collaborate on posts with partner organizations to highlight international efforts and strengthen the network.

5. Interactive and Inspiring Content:

- Use storytelling to communicate the historical and cultural value of railways, with members and volunteers sharing their roles.
- Develop themed weeks on social media, such as "Railway Heritage Week," to attract a broader audience and showcase the value of heritage.

By strategically utilizing these channels, FEDECRAIL can create an engaging, long-term communication platform that strengthens visibility and member engagement.

External affairs & working groups.

Heritage Operations Group (HOG).

In 2025, FEDECRAIL will prioritize the restructuring of HOG to better meet the evolving needs of our organization and the heritage rail sector community. As a critical function within FEDECRAIL, HOG plays a vital role in addressing operational challenges and supporting our mission.

To strengthen its impact, we recognize the importance of broadening HOG's scope, to include non-main line operations. This will be achieved through the existing group.

This restructuring will ensure HOG remains adaptable and well-equipped to tackle the complexities of the sector while enhancing its capacity to support our members effectively. By expanding its remit, HOG will continue to be a cornerstone of FEDECRAIL's operations, fostering innovation and collaboration across the heritage rail sector network.

External Representation & Meetings

- Attend Group of Representative bodies (GRB) and Network of Representative bodies NRB meetings (2 NRB meetings in person; others online).
- Plan a meeting with European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) new director in 2025.

Member Support:

- Host at least quarterly online meetings on focus subjects of interest to all members and one interactive in-person session at the conference.
- Assist members and stakeholders with regulatory and operational issues.

HOG Communication:

- Hold one in-person interactive session at conference.
- Provide quarterly online updates, starting January 2025
- Provide email updates of topics of interest to the members.

European Platform for Working Industrial and mobile Heritage (WIMH).

WIMH's 2025 action plan strategically addresses key issues in preserving Europe's industrial and mobile heritage. The plan focuses on expanding EU networks, refining lobbying efforts, and clarifying funding and responsibility.

Core Objectives

1. **Political Awareness:** Post-2024 EU elections, WIMH seeks to enhance political support for industrial and mobile heritage as a fundamental part of European identity.
2. **Preservation of Fossil Fuels as Heritage:** Advocating for the cultural legitimacy of fossil fuel use within heritage sectors, addressing availability and environmental challenges.
3. **Skill Transfer:** Promoting educational initiatives to ensure skills crucial to maintaining heritage assets are passed to future generations.

Key Activities

- **Lobbying and Communications:** Year-round lobbying program with EPPA support, engaging MEPs and EU Commissioners.
- **Webinars and Conferences:** Stakeholder webinar in Q1 and a conference in Q2 to foster EU-WIMH agreements.
- **WIMH Report:** Exploring a future report akin to the 2018/19 study on culturally significant buildings.

Challenges

- **Funding and Partner Commitments:** Ensuring each partner's financial and logistical commitment to stabilize funding.
- **Platform Formalization:** Considering legal status for WIMH to secure structured responsibility and funding.
- **Financial Shifts:** Adjusting to new funding structures, impacting future project possibilities.

Environmental working group

Fedecrail's mission for 2025 focuses on balancing the preservation of Europe's railway and tramway heritage with the responsibility to reduce environmental impacts. Through strategic collaboration, informed decision-making, and increased member engagement, we aim to foster a culture of sustainability that benefits both heritage and the environment.

Environmental Responsibility and Awareness

Fedecrail will prioritize environmental stewardship by addressing the impacts of preserved railways and tramways on the environment.

This includes:

- Reducing the use of harmful substances and promoting sustainable practices aligned with the Paris Agreement principles.
- Encouraging responsible energy use, minimizing waste, and increasing the use of renewable energy sources.
- Raising awareness of the importance of preserving both railway heritage and the natural environment for future generations.

Collaboration Through the Environmental Working Group (EWG)

- Strengthen the EWG to focus on key topics such as fossil fuel reduction, waste management, and compliance with European regulations.
- Facilitate information sharing by collecting and disseminating successful environmental projects from members across Europe.

Support for the European Green Deal

- Provide an updated synthesis of environmental initiatives to Members of the European Parliament and the European Commission.
- Establish regular dialogues with European institutions to promote environmentally friendly policies related to railway heritage.

Enhanced Member Engagement

- Host virtual/in person meetings in 2025 to discuss key topics, share experiences, and address challenges.

Strengthened Collaboration with WIMH (Working Initiative on Museum Heritage)

- Ensure Fedecrail's active involvement in WIMH (Working Initiative on Museum Heritage) initiatives by participating in major conferences and virtual meetings to foster close collaboration and information exchange.

Tramway Group

The Tramway Working Group has four key objectives for 2025, to:

- Understand the current challenges affecting tramway preservation, historic demonstration, and wider industry.
- Understand the current opportunities available for tramway preservation and historic demonstration and wider industry.
- Identify key examples of successful tramway preservation to promote best practices.
- Grow membership of Tramway Working Group.

The first step in fulfilling these objectives is to promote participation in the 'Tramway 2025 - Challengers and Opportunities' survey, the secretary and chair request that all tramway leaders participate in this and share with peers across Europe (while the survey is only currently available in English, translations can be produced as requested). Responses will be compiled in early 2025 and presented at the FEDECRAIL 2025 AGM on the Isle of Man. It is hoped to create through this project an ongoing relationship with tramway members across Europe who will wish to participate in Tramway Working Group going forward.

Looking further into the future, if a larger core group of Tramway Working Group Members can be established, it is hoped to arrange several webinars/lectures or discussion groups throughout the year, and even organise an in-person 'field trip' to see best practices in action.

New Youth Initiative

In 2024, FEDECRAIL took the first steps in reshaping its approach to youth engagement by developing the Bronze Award level of the Youth Upskill Program. For 2025, the primary objective is to implement this program widely, enabling Young Volunteers (16–25) to achieve or work towards this recognition. Participants will complete at least 50 hours of volunteer service across three disciplines and relevant training courses, fostering a versatile and well-rounded new generation of practitioners for heritage rail sector.

This initiative aims to demonstrate the educational and career benefits of upskilling, both for the volunteers and the host railways. The Bronze Award framework is highly flexible, designed for implementation across FEDECRAIL's 500+ member organizations. Volunteers who complete the program will receive a certificate and inclusion in a youth database to connect them with further opportunities. Host railways that support volunteers achieving the Bronze Award will gain the right to display the program's kitemark, symbolizing their commitment to youth development.

During 2025, FEDECRAIL will hold informational online and in person meetings about the new youth initiative, targeting members, their member organizations, and other stakeholders. These sessions will provide guidance on implementing the program and highlight its benefits, fostering greater participation and collaboration across the sector.

Looking ahead, additional levels of the program will be developed, with the long-term goal of creating schemes robust enough to offer educational credits, further enhancing the value of participation for both individuals and organizations. This initiative underscores FEDECRAIL's dedication to fostering youth engagement and ensuring a thriving future for the heritage rail sector.

UIC International Union of Railways, TopRail – Future Rail Tourism

Since signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the UIC in 2017 we have worked with them alongside their national railway and tourist organisation members in the development and promotion of Rail Tourism. Our objectives are to ensure that our Members' Museum and Tourism Railway operations are recognised as a key function of sustainable rail tourism. We are part way through the TopRail Vision 2024-2026 programme to promote and deliver Sustainable Rail Tourism as being the mode of choice for leisure travellers.

Meetings

We aim to connect with our members as frequently as possible, though we understand that attending various events can be both challenging and costly. To address this, we plan to expand our digital interaction capabilities in 2025. We will host at least three digital meetings and interactive sessions with members and stakeholders, creating more accessible opportunities for engagement.

Our annual conference and general assembly will be held on the Isle of Man from May 8-12. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at this historic transportation site, and we anticipate a rewarding and informative event.



In addition, our working groups will address various topics throughout the year, with FEDECRAIL actively supporting both digital and, when possible, in-person meetings.

We would like to remind all members of the importance of active participation in meetings and activities. Without member input, it is challenging for FEDECRAIL to determine the best course forward. Member engagement is vital to guiding FEDECRAIL's work and priorities, and we strongly encourage members to nominate individuals for the board ahead of the general assembly.

Data and surveys

It is essential for our members to support FEDECRAIL in data collection efforts. When we engage with the EU, national politicians, similar organizations, and in our lobbying efforts, data and statistics often prove crucial in illustrating the full scope of our representation. Key metrics for example such as fossil fuel usage, track length, train kilometres, visitor numbers, staffing levels, volunteer contributions, and the number of historical vehicles are just a few examples of valuable data points that FEDECRAIL relies on.

This data helps us advocate effectively for our shared heritage preservation goals, supporting lobbying for legislative protections, fostering favourable insurance arrangements, and building awareness about the critical importance of safeguarding our operations. By showing the scale and impact of our work, we strengthen our position and create better conditions for our members.

In 2025, FEDECRAIL will prioritize data collection, and it is vital that we all work together to provide accurate, comprehensive information. This collaboration will enable us to move forward confidently, equipped with the data needed to advance our mission and create a sustainable future for rail-based heritage.