

Annual Report 2024



European Federation of Museum & Tourist Railways

Fédération Européenne des Chemins de Fer Touristiques et Historiques

Europäische Föderation der Museums- und Touristikbahnen

Introduction from the President

It always feels a bit unusual, as a newly appointed chairperson, to be drafting the annual report so soon. By the time I assumed this role, nearly half the year had already passed, and I've had to quickly adapt to a new perspective within the organization. This initial period has been both rewarding and full of learning as I familiarized myself with our network and members in a different capacity. Working with the new board, we've laid the groundwork for what I believe will be both a challenging and exciting journey forward.

This year has seen a range of activities that highlight our commitment and impact. We have been actively working with our dedicated working groups, each contributing uniquely to FEDECRAIL's mission. The World Industrial Mobile Heritage (WIMH) initiative continues to build valuable connections, making strides toward establishing a more cohesive approach to preserving industrial heritage across borders. The Tramway Group, under new leadership, has embarked on a fresh start, revitalizing its efforts and goals. Meanwhile, our Heritage Operating Group remains actively engaged with the EU, advocating for regulations that support the unique needs of heritage railways and tramways.

In partnership with NERHT, we've had the privilege of visiting Bosnia, Poland, and Lithuania, solidifying our connections with heritage rail communities in these regions. These visits not only allow us to deepen our collaboration but also reinforce the sense of solidarity and shared purpose that unites us.

As we look to the future, the board has crafted its first annual plan, setting out a clear roadmap for the coming year. At the same time, we continue to address ongoing challenges, such as the track-related issue in Belgium, which remains a pressing concern. Financially, we face another challenging year, ending with a deficit once again. However, we are fully aware that this trend must change, and we are committed to turning it around in the years ahead.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the board, our officers, and our members. Your dedication, hard work, and unwavering passion for preserving our rail heritage are what make FEDECRAIL's mission possible. Together, we continue to champion the preservation and promotion of Europe's mobile rail heritage, and I am both humbled and inspired by the remarkable progress we have achieved this year. I look forward to working alongside each of you as we embrace the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Thank you for your invaluable contributions to our shared vision



The Year 2024

In this section/chapter we will give a general overview of the developments in 2024, also in relation to the annual plan 2024 as presented by the board and as accepted by the members of FEDERAIL at the AGM 2024.

FEDECRAIL, the European Federation of Museum & Tourist Railways, comprises approximately 58 member organizations across 29 countries. This diverse network is dedicated to preserving and promoting Europe's railway heritage. During the 2024 Annual General Meeting, FEDECRAIL welcomed a new member from Ukraine, Linia 102, expanding its reach in Eastern Europe. However, the organization also saw the departure of a member who was voted out due to non-payment of membership fees over several years. This adjustment maintains FEDECRAIL's strong and active membership base, committed to collaboration and growth across Europe and beyond.

During 2024, the board consisted of 7 members, supported by our officers. Throughout the year, there were internal changes in roles, as listed below.

Board	Position
Jaap Nieweg	President until retired May 2024
Pierluigi Scoizzato	Vice President
Mimmi Mickelsen	Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer from oct 2023 until May 2024 then President
Frédéric Riehl	Treasurer until oct 2023 retired May 2024
Gottfried Aldrian	Council Member, secretary from May 2024
Philippe Dupont	Council member vice President from May 2024
Josef Van de Perre	Belgian Representative until retired May 2024
Jenny Nunn	Treasurer from May 2024
Marieke Nauta	Council member from May 2024

Rik Degruyter Council member from May 2024

Officers

Peter Ovenstone	WIMH/European Platform
Jaap Nieweg	WIMH/European Platform from May 2024
Steve Wood	Chairman HOG
Ian Leigh	HOG Secretary, finance officer
Jenny Nunn	TG Secretary, Communication until May 2024
Josh Castree	Webmaster, TG
John Fuller	TopRail/UIC
Per Englund	Chair of TG from May 2024
Sam Burton Smith	Secretary of TG from May 2024
Jacques Daffis	Mediterranean cooperation
Ingrid Schütte	Press and Update Manager

Auditors

Jean Paul Lescat	2023 re-elected 2024
Guido Rossi	2023
Frauke Lehmann	elected 2024
Per Englund	elected 2024

Board Affairs

Our funds remain in a Euro bank account in Sweden. The search for a new banking partner in Belgium has continued now headed by Rik Degruyter.

Mimmi Mickelsen, has handed over the responsibilities of treasurer to Jenny Nunn after the AGM in 2024 and secretarial duties to Gottfried Aldrian. Ian Leigh has continued in the executive financial administrator role.

We primarily continued with online meetings in 2024; however, given the new composition of the board, an in-person meeting was held in Amsterdam shortly after the AGM in Bilbao. A large portion of the board

and officers gathered to work through the 2024 annual plan, budget, ongoing projects, and general strategies. This gathering was especially valuable for the new board, providing an opportunity to connect, establish a strong team dynamic, and build their network for future collaboration.

Efforts to modernize our administrative organization are currently underway, with a focus on leveraging the latest ICT advancements for greater efficiency. This modernization aims to better equip our organization and its members to adapt to the rapidly evolving landscape. Ian Leigh has taken on some of the administrative tasks as a paid activity to support the President, Treasurer and Secretary.

During the year, the Board initiated a review and update of FEDECRAIL's constitution to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with the organization's needs and future development. At the same time, we began work on developing a policy for inclusion, diversity, and equity (IDE). This policy will strengthen the organization's efforts to create an open and inclusive environment for all members, which we believe will benefit both FEDECRAIL and its member organizations in the long term.

Additionally, we have continued to expand our network and collaborate with similar organizations to share knowledge and reinforce our common goals within the cultural heritage sector. We have also explored opportunities for EU grants and other forms of external funding to further strengthen our resources.

This work will continue into 2025, with the aim of fully implementing these changes and further expanding our financial opportunities and collaborations.

During the development of the strategic plan 2023-2028, it became evident that the FEDECRAIL constitution, last updated on January 11th, 2020, required further adjustment. Consequently, a working group was

established to prepare for these changes. A second presentation outlining this process was delivered during the autumn members meeting in St Quentin on November 2nd, 2024.

Strategic Plan

The implementation of the strategic plan 2023 – 2028, which was accepted by the members during the AGM 2023 in Krems an der Donau, is currently in full swing. This strategic plan marks a pivotal moment for our organization as we embark on a journey towards a more inclusive future.

Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound (SMART)

SMART is adopted throughout this strategic plan and will be linked to a traffic light system.



So, it is clear by the colour allocated that which items should be implemented quickly as they are in red, with yellow for the medium term and green has a longer time horizon.

Finance 2024

2024 has been a challenging year for FEDECRAIL, as well as for many of our member organisations. Global economic uncertainty, the lingering impacts of the pandemic, and lower participation in our events have significantly affected our operations. Despite these challenges, we have fulfilled our commitments to members and continued our efforts to preserve Europe's heritage rail sector.

One of the year's most prominent issues has been a budget deficit of approximately 35250€. The primary cause of this deficit has been lower-than-expected participation in our conferences and events, which has prevented us from achieving a financial break-even. To cover this deficit, we have had to utilise our financial reserves—a step we see as necessary but far from ideal. Using these reserves in this manner highlights the urgent need to adjust our strategy moving forward.

We recognise that relying on our reserves is not a sustainable solution. A different approach is required to ensure the long-term stability and relevance of FEDECRAIL. Key measures we plan to implement include:

We can trace the economic downturn since around 2019. During the pandemic, FEDECRAIL reduced its membership fees to support its members during an exceptionally difficult period. We have yet to return to the pre-pandemic fee levels, which has contributed to our current financial challenges. Gradually restoring these fees to more sustainable levels is essential. Accurate invoicing is also critical, and we urge all members to report any changes in their operations that may affect their membership points.

FEDECRAIL's work relies on the collaboration and engagement of its members. We see it as our responsibility to create value for our members and ensure their voices are heard at both national and international levels. At the same time, we must collectively work to strengthen the organisation's financial foundation and adapt to the evolving circumstances.

2024 has served as a reminder of both the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. We enter 2025 with a clear understanding of what is needed to secure future and to continue our mission of preserving Europe's heritage rail sector.

Communication

During 2024, the FEDECRAIL board placed a stronger emphasis on effective communication, recognizing it as essential to our member-focused approach and organizational transparency. To achieve this, we expanded our online presence through our website, social media platforms, and the launch of a YouTube channel.

Our social media strategy grew to include accounts on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok, where we actively shared updates, news, and highlights from our members. For example, Instagram was used to showcase visually compelling stories from heritage railways across Europe, while LinkedIn connected us with industry professionals and partners in a more formal setting. On TikTok and YouTube, we shared videos that provided a closer look into our members' projects and FEDECRAIL's own initiatives, reaching a broader and younger audience.

These efforts engaged a wider audience and kept our members connected, resulting in a noticeable increase in traffic to our website, which continued to serve as the central hub of our communication efforts. We remained committed to developing our digital presence to ensure it provided valuable information and resources for members and stakeholders alike.

Moving forward, we will continue to prioritize communication, recognizing its role as a fundamental tool in fostering a collaborative and connected FEDECRAIL community.

Annual General Meeting in Bilbao

The annual General meeting was held in Bilbao in the Basque region of Spain.

From May 2nd to 5th, attendees enjoyed a series of events. Beginning on Thursday afternoon with a visit to the Bilbao Tram depot, followed in the

evening with a meet and greet event. Friday morning started with working group meetings encompassing HOG, Working Industrial and Mobile Heritage/Environment and Tramway. Notably, the HOG meeting embraced a hybrid model, welcoming members from across Europe. In the afternoon we held the first day of the conference. Saturday morning, we held the AGM and concluded the conference in the afternoon. On Sunday we were able to visit the Basque Railway Museum in Azpeitia, travelling most of the way on the narrow gauge run by our member EuskoTren.



At the annual meeting in Bilbao, we were pleased to welcome two Ukrainian representatives, Antonina Kopaieva and Uliana Vozniak, whose participation was supported by FEDECRAIL and NERHT. They represented "Linia 102," a new member of our organization. During the conference, they

shared insights about their work within children's railways and other related activities, providing valuable perspectives and fresh insights. Their active participation enriched discussions and contributed to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the railway sector.

FEDECRAIL celebrated its 30th anniversary throughout 2024, with a special event held in Bilbao on Saturday evening following the Annual General Meeting. The celebration was well-attended, featuring numerous participants and specially invited guests from Spain, providing a memorable tribute to FEDECRAIL's three decades of dedication to railway heritage. In honor of this milestone, a commemorative logo was also created, symbolizing our legacy and commitment as we look toward the future.

During the formal AGM, the members approved the accounts for 2023, the annual plan for 2024, and the budget for 2024.



General Meeting 2024 St Quentin

The weekend in St Quentin was a resounding success, featuring a visit to a Heritage railway, productive working group meetings, and a comprehensive general meeting.

Beginning on Friday, with the working groups. The HOG meeting covered a range of topics including ERTMS, coal and alternative fuels, vehicle acceptance, and more. The HOG group's management also provided updates from meetings with ERA. Then participants enjoyed a visit to the Chemin De Fer Touristique Du Vermandois (visit of the shed 60 min+ 90 min ride – local craft beers + cheese tasting). This visit provided an excellent opportunity for networking and exchange among our members.

On Saturday morning we had the opening speech and General meeting, as we were in France a long lunch was combined to the working SNCF signal box. Followed by the executive meeting and various workshops, speakers etc.

The general meeting, addressed various current topics within FEDECRAIL, including the presentation of the annual plan for 2025 and budget. The board also highlighted ongoing issues with bank accounts in Belgium.

During the executive meeting, participants were asked to identify the five biggest challenges faced by their companies and members. These challenges were grouped into categories such as regulations, volunteers, visitors, funding/fundraising, and sustainability/fossil fuels, among others.



FEDECRAIL and Young people

In 2024, we developed a framework for the FEDECRAIL Youth Upskill Programme, with the intention to continue refining it throughout 2025, ultimately aiming for a full launch by the end of the year. This program is designed to encourage young people aged 16 to 25 to actively participate in the heritage railway sector and includes an accredited certification to formally recognize their contributions and skill development.

Key objectives of the framework are:

- **Increasing Engagement and Skills:** To provide young people with valuable, hands-on experience and to grow the number of young volunteers in heritage railway organizations. This will help foster a pathway for sustained engagement within the sector.
- **Supporting Transferable Skill Development:** By offering training across a range of roles, we aim to provide participants with a versatile skill set applicable to various career paths.
- **Flexible Implementation Across Europe:** The framework is designed for adaptation by historical railway organizations throughout Europe, promoting wide-ranging participation.
- **Strengthening Volunteer Capacities and Recognition:** Volunteers gain a sense of accomplishment through formal accreditation, valuable for future employment both within and outside the railway sector.
- **Educational Credits:** The plan lays the groundwork for potentially including program credits toward further education.

The Youth Upskill Programme will involve:

1. **Recognition and Certification:** Young volunteers will receive an accredited certification for their work and skills, offering recognized experience valuable for job applications.
2. **Training and Experience:** Participants will begin with introductory training in areas like workplace safety and track-side security. They

will accumulate 50+ hours of experience across at least three disciplines, such as technical work, train management, or administrative roles.

3. **Cross-Border Opportunities and Networking:** A European network of young railway enthusiasts will offer exchange opportunities and foster cross-cultural learning.
4. **Framework for Heritage Organizations:** This structured program will support national heritage organizations in engaging youth effectively and sustainably.

This framework, to be implemented over the coming year, aims to build a lasting legacy by equipping young people with professional skills and fostering international connections. The Youth Upskill Programme will not only enhance personal development but also contribute to the preservation of Europe's shared railway heritage.



FEDECRAIL Working Groups Heritage Operations Group

HOG has been very active in 2024. We continue to monitor topics which concern our members such as ERTMS and ECM. Face to face meetings have taken place in Bilbao (AGM), and St Quentin (General Meeting). Two online meetings have taken place. We did have to cancel a third in person meeting planned for Bo'ness in Scotland in September as there no bookings.

We attended the Group of Representative Bodies (GRB) meets the executive director of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) Josef Doppelbauer and the GRB Plenary in Brussels. Plus 2 of the 4 NRB meetings between ERA and GRB The meeting with Josef is extremely useful as it gives an insight to the way the Agency (ERA) is moving and an insight into the future and the policy of ERA. We also held a face-to-face meeting with Josef in 2024, as he left ERA at the end of 2024. This discussed a range of topics so we both understand each other's positions better.

We have supported our member in Ireland with their licence renewal for Main Line running and assisted our Spanish umbrella member with how regulation set up and managed in other countries. Separate reports are available on the above.

Platform for Working Industrial and Mobile Heritage (WIMH)

The Working Industrial and Mobile Heritage (WIMH) initiative, led by FEDECRAIL and the Fédération Internationale des Véhicules Anciens (FIVA), works in collaboration with key organizations like the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH), Europa Nostra Industrial & Engineering Heritage Committee (ENIEHC), and The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH). Together, they preserve

Europe's industrial and mobile heritage, from operational historic transport and machinery to the knowledge that shaped Europe's industrial growth.

In 2024, WIMH focused on advocacy, securing support for EU policies that protect heritage in working condition, which includes maintaining a limited but essential use of fossil fuels for authentic operations. The initiative launched wimh.eu to increase public access to resources and expanded its educational programs in partnership with ERIH's Young Professionals Group, fostering the next generation's involvement in heritage conservation. Additionally, WIMH strengthened its financial structure through member contributions to sustain future efforts.

Moving forward, WIMH will address challenges around sustainable fuel use and expand advocacy efforts, including a planned event in Brussels in 2025 to engage EU representatives. With ongoing support from its partners, WIMH remains committed to ensuring Europe's industrial heritage remains a living, accessible legacy for future generations.



Environmental Group (EWG)

During 2024, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) undertook significant efforts to rejuvenate its activities, laying a solid foundation for future impact. A series of productive meetings were conducted in collaboration with the Working Industrial and Mobile Heritage (WIMH) group, reflecting the shared commitment to addressing environmental challenges within the heritage rail and industrial sectors.

A key milestone this year was the establishment of a clear delineation of responsibilities between EWG and WIMH, led by two newly appointed FEDECRAIL representatives. This clarified framework ensures that while each group has distinct focus areas, their work remains closely aligned and complementary. The collaboration with WIMH continues to be a vital component of EWG's strategy, strengthening ties and promoting joint initiatives.

Beyond organizational restructuring, the EWG also tackled critical environmental topics, particularly those affecting the operation of tourist railways. These discussions included:

- The environmental sustainability of tourist lines and the impact of pollutants, such as addressing potential European-level regulations on liquid discharges from carriage toilets and exploring feasible solutions.
- Energy recovery in line buildings, including stations, warehouses, and depots, to promote resource efficiency.
- Improved management of polluting materials from depot activities, such as locomotive cleaning, oil handling, and coal slag disposal.

The EWG emphasized the importance of sharing experiences across countries, acknowledging that approaches vary but that collective learning

strengthens environmental practices. These discussions have reinforced the group's focus on practical, sustainable solutions for heritage rail operations.

Much of 2024 was dedicated to restructuring and revitalizing EWG, with efforts aimed at redefining its objectives and operational strategies. This groundwork is expected to yield significant benefits in the coming years, positioning EWG as a key driver of environmental awareness and action within the heritage rail community. We remain committed to fostering this momentum and leveraging the synergies between EWG and WIMH to address environmental issues with renewed vigor.

Tramway Group

The Tramway Group had an engaging year in 2024, marked by two important in-person meetings: one in Bilbao and another in Saint Quentin. These gatherings, though modest in size, were rich in dialogue and collaboration, highlighting the group's commitment to strengthening tramway heritage within the broader scope of FEDECRAIL's mission. This year, the Tramway Group welcomed new leadership, with both a new secretary and chair taking up roles, and launched a survey aimed at mapping interests and generating increased engagement with tramway enthusiasts.

One of the ongoing challenges has been the misconception that FEDECRAIL focuses solely on railway heritage. In response, the Tramway Group has made targeted efforts to clarify its role, emphasizing the importance of tramway heritage as an integral part of Europe's transport history. The meetings in Bilbao and Saint Quentin provided a platform to spotlight the group's work and build connections across different organizations. In Bilbao, attendees were treated to a series of enlightening presentations, including insights into UK Trams' initiatives, the upcoming procurement challenges facing the Stockholm Museum Tramway, and Sweden's

longstanding tramway youth camps, which have inspired young enthusiasts for over 20 years. Meanwhile, in Saint Quentin, the discussions continued with a more intimate “roundtable” format, where representatives from Crich and Oslo shared their experiences and challenges in maintaining their museum tramways. These sessions fostered meaningful exchange, showing that while our gatherings may be small, the discussions are impactful and pave the way for stronger collaboration.

Looking ahead to 2025, we aim to increase the frequency of meetings and events, inviting more voices into the conversation. The Tramway Group remains committed to advancing tramway heritage and looks forward to an even more dynamic year of dialogue and partnership.



UIC/TopRail

Since FEDECRAIL signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the UIC on 27th April 2017 we have worked with the UIC TopRail Projects to promote and develop opportunities for Rail Tourism. The MoU between FEDECRAIL and the UIC is continued in recognition of our inputs to the work over the last seven years and the importance of sustainable development of Rail Tourism to include Heritage and Museum Tourist products. The work on “Future Rail Tourism 2025” continued during 2024. This aims to define the key factors in shaping the future of Rail Tourism taking us forward from 2025 which need to be built into strategic planning for our industry.

Representation of FEDECRAIL external

Throughout 2024, FEDECRAIL has actively represented the interests of heritage railways and tramways at numerous international events, strengthening connections within the global rail heritage community.

One of the highlights was the Wattrain Conference 2024, held in Castellammare di Stabia, Naples, where President Mimmi Mickelsen and Vice President Pierluigi Scozzato represented FEDECRAIL. This event, attended both in person and online, brought together key heritage rail organizations from around the world. Discussions covered topics from fossil fuel use in heritage preservation to insurance and climate impact. Eastern Europe and Africa's growing interest in heritage rail was particularly noteworthy, opening doors for future collaborations. A visit to the National Railway Museum in Pietrarsa was a standout experience, with the museum praised as one of the finest railway museums globally.

FEDECRAIL also participated in the UK Tram Summit 2024 in Birmingham. Mimmi Mickelsen attended this insightful event, which covered both modern and heritage tramway issues, strengthening ties with UKTram and underscoring the commitment to tramway heritage.

In September, FEDECRAIL members joined the 125th Anniversary of the Aukštaitija Narrow-Gauge Railway in Lithuania. This celebration included a conference featuring prominent Lithuanian cultural and tourism figures. FEDECRAIL delivered a presentation on European heritage rail activities, while NERHT representatives highlighted British heritage railway successes. The event culminated in the annual Narrow-Gauge Railway Birthday Festival, showcasing Lithuania's dedication to preserving its rail history.

FEDECRAIL also strengthened its presence in Poland, participating in a joint visit with NERHT and attending a Polish conference. These engagements fostered further collaboration in Eastern Europe, an area of growing focus.

Additionally, FEDECRAIL members attended various partner meetings and events, including the reopening of the Swedish Railway Museum in Gävle, reflecting a year filled with international outreach and local engagement.

These activities illustrate some of FEDECRAIL's commitment to supporting and promoting heritage rail at a global level, setting a strong foundation for continued collaboration and growth in 2025.

