(English version)

Question for written answer E-000647/25
to the Commission
Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (Renew)
(12 February 2025)

Subject: Persistent obstacles to the improvement of cross-border rail transport

Connecting Europeans through better transport infrastructure has been a key ambition of the EU for decades now. However, key issues remain unresolved, including concerns about cross-border train schedules, fragmented ticketing, lack of interoperability in rail traffic operations, restrictive policies regarding the international deployment of railway personnel, and the lack of interregional cross-border connections to emerging high-speed rail. Ensuring the EU's future competitiveness and achieving our climate targets requires a step change in the EU's efforts to improve cross-border rail connectivity.

As the Commission plans to propose a simplified system, we feel it is the moment to ask the following questions ([1]):

1. Will the Commission propose adjustments and/or new legislation to improve the EU's trans-European transport network (TEN-T) policies in order to effectively tackle the problems mentioned above? If yes, what kind of adjustments and/or legislation and in what time frame? If not, what argument(s) does the Commission have to not propose it?

2. What can be expected from the Commission's proposals regarding the simplification of European railway systems, what policy elements are included and when does the Commission plan to present it?

3. What national barriers (either technical or legal) are currently in place within the EU regarding cross-border train movement, and why have these barriers not yet been removed?'

Submitted: 12.2.2025

Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas on behalf of the European Commission
(4 July 2025)

1. Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 ([1]) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on *Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network*, the TEN-T Regulation, was only adopted last year. It sets, amongst others, deadlines for the completion of networks and for the replacement of national, non-interoperable, rail safety systems ('class B' systems), with an EU standard system, notably the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).

The regulation contains mechanisms to steer its level of implementation, including through national plans and programmes, the annual status report and the work plans drawn up by the European Coordinators as well as a review clause per 31 December 2033.

2. The Commission, supported by the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA), works continuously to harmonise administrative and technical requirements for railways in the EU. Recent initiatives include the proposal to renew the rules on capacity allocation, which is currently being negotiated with the European Parliament and the Council. Upcoming initiatives include proposals on the revision of the Train Drivers Directive ([2]) and a new legislative initiative on ticketing.

3. Together with Member States and ERA, the Commission works to identify and to remove identified barriers. Tools to identify these barriers include the so-called '*log-book'* for freight services and the pilot projects for cross-border long-distance passenger rail. In addition, the regular updates of the Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSI) support the further harmonisation of technical and operational rules.

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[1] [1]Ajit Niranjan, 'Eurostar the worst-performing rail service in Europe, campaigners find', Guardian, 9 December 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/dec/09/eurostar-the-worst-performing-rail-service-in-europe-campaigners-find.

([1]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1679/oj/eng.

([2]) Directive 2007/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the certification of train drivers operating locomotives and trains on the railway system in the Community, OJ L 315, 3.12.2007, p. 51-78.