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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Ribera
on behalf of the European Commission
(5.6.2025)

The Commission values and supports rail transport. Recognising the challenges it is facing, the Commission approved aid worth more than EUR 13.5 billion for investment aid measures between 2008 and 2023, including support for the construction of railway facilities, single wagon load operations, the use of service facilities and the reduction of track access charges. In 2024, the Commission presented the draft new State aid rules for Land and multimodal transport, extending the possibilities offered to Member States to finance investment and operating aid for sustainable modes of transport such as rail and inland waterway transport¹.

Market opening does not explain the difficulties of rail freight in France. Indeed, Member States, despite having all experienced market opening to competition, show different developments between 2006 and 2022. While in France, the tonne/kilometres of freight transported by rail declined (-14%), it did increase in Germany (+20%), Belgium (+18%), Denmark (+17%), the Netherlands (+14%) and Poland (+10%)².

The Commission is still investigating the individual State support for Fret SNCF of more than EUR 5 billion. Pending the decision, the French authorities decided to transform Fret SNCF into Hexafret and Technis which started operations in 2025 with no disruption to rail freight services. In addition, certain activities of former Fret SNCF have been successfully transferred to other operators bringing new opportunities to those operators and to the market as a whole and fostering competitiveness.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_3346.

² Source: https://transport.ec.europa.eu/facts-funding/studies-data/eu-transport-figures-statistical-pocketbook/statistical-pocketbook-2024_en.