

EN

E-002520/2025

Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas
on behalf of the European Commission
(17.9.2025)

Over the last twenty years, developments in rail freight vary across Member States: those with the strongest growth also have the highest number of freight undertakings operating on their territory (250 in Germany, 105 in Poland, while only 23 in France in 2023)¹. Therefore, market opening alone does not explain rail freight difficulties in France.

On 18 January 2023, the Commission opened a formal investigation into over EUR 5 billion French support to Fret SNCF under EU State aid rules. The case is ongoing. Meanwhile, France transformed Fret SNCF into Hexafret and Technis, which began operations in 2025 without disruption. Several activities moved to other operators, boosting competition and creating new market opportunities, as confirmed by the French Rail Regulatory Body ART². Only one contract, the ‘train des primeurs’, ended for commercial reasons, though public financing had been approved by the Commission in late 2022.

The Commission approved over EUR 13.5 billion in investment aid between 2008 and 2023 for railway facilities, single wagon load operations, service facilities and reduced track access charges. In 2024, draft new State aid rules for land and multimodal transport were presented, broadening possibilities to support sustainable modes such as rail and inland waterways³.

Policy measures include the Trans-European Transport Network, interoperability initiatives and a legislative proposal on infrastructure capacity, now in final stages of interinstitutional negotiations. Once adopted, it will improve access, reliability and competitiveness.

¹ Source: <https://irg-rail.eu/irg/documents/market-monitoring/536,2025.html>.

² https://www.autorite-transports.fr/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/bilan-ferroviaire-france-2024_plaquette-a-mi-annee.pdf.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_3346.