

EN

E-003173/2026

Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas
on behalf of the European Commission
(19.10.2026)

Different track gauges hamper interoperability, cross-border connectivity and the integration of the Union rail system. By contrast, a fully interoperable track gauge network can foster greater competition, benefiting both passengers and the wider economy.

Pursuant to article 17(1), the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) Regulation¹ creates an obligation of compliance with the European track gauge standard only for the new railway lines. As regards the existing railway lines located on the European Transport Corridors, the Commission has officially received the Spanish track gauge migration assessment pursuant to article 17(3) of the TEN-T Regulation. Although no formal opinion is required and considering the importance of the integration and interoperability of the Union rail system, the Commission intends to analyse the assessment, together with both Coordinators for the Atlantic and Mediterranean Corridors, within the coming months.

The Spanish assessment is owned by the Spanish authorities, and any request for access should therefore be addressed to them.

Under the TEN-T Regulation, non-standard-gauge networks are classified as ‘isolated networks’ and are therefore not subject to certain standards and requirements of the TEN-T Regulation, including electrification, loading gauge, European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) and the enabling the operation of freight trains with a train length of at least 740 meters.

Although not required to do so, Spain generally strives to achieve equivalent standards across its network, and the technical status of the isolated network shall be provided in the next Work Plan of the European Coordinator for the Atlantic Corridor to be published this autumn 2026.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2024/1679, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1679/oj/eng>.