

Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on the action plan to boost long-distance and cross-border passenger rail

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2. **Reference number:** 2022/2022 (INI) / A9-0242/2022 / P9_TA(2022)0437
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 13 December 2022
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN)
5. **Brief analysis / assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution welcomes the main objectives of the Commission's Action Plan to boost long distance and cross border passenger rail to make rail transport more attractive, competitive and efficient. However, it also makes several calls on the Commission for action:

On the establishment of cross-border pilot services, the Parliament calls on the Commission to identify as soon as possible resources for this purpose and for a clear timeframe with appropriate milestones and objectives (paragraph 3).

For the full deployment of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) (paragraph 5) in order to help create a digital single European railway area, the Parliament welcomes (paragraph 8) the Commission's proposal to speed up the Union-wide deployment of ERTMS in the revision of the TEN-T Regulation while setting a deadline for the decommissioning of Class-B systems.

On ERTMS (paragraph 10) to ensure the synchronised deployment of trackside systems and on-board units and for improved ERTMS governance to ensure this synchronised deployment at both national and EU level. Also, the need to ensure quick, sufficient and efficient financing and funding (paragraph 11) and to improve the attractiveness of investing in the ERTMS (paragraph 13).

On inter-operability (paragraph 6), boosting long-distance rail transport must be accompanied by its integration into different inter-regional, regional, urban and peri-urban rail networks. Also, the importance of speeding up the construction of new rail lines and of further promoting the completion of infrastructure projects, in order to close existing missing links (paragraph 7). The resolution calls for efforts to extend the coordinated timetables already introduced in some Member States to the EU level in order to facilitate easy and smooth travel for all EU citizens across borders (paragraph 14).

On completion of TEN T core network (paragraph 15), the Parliament calls for the elimination of bottlenecks and missing links and the completion of cross-border sections; and priority investments should be also directed at the development of long-distance, cross-border high-speed rail connections. It calls on the Commission to adopt actions and projects to support better connectivity of local sustainable and rail multimodal transport in peripheral and coastal areas with lower margins for development (paragraph 17).

On cross border rail connections to EU enlargement countries (paragraph 21), the resolution

stresses the significance of cross-border rail connections to the Western Balkans region and notes the importance of an effective and fast border-crossing mechanism at the EU's external borders with the EU enlargement countries.

On rolling stock (paragraph 27), the Parliament calls on railway companies to plan sufficient orders of high-speed rolling stock, in line with the Commission's goals to double high-speed by 2040; points out, equally, that the rolling stock for night train services needs timely planning in order to facilitate the renaissance of night trains; draws attention, furthermore, to the fact that sufficient availability of rolling stock for the forthcoming planned reinstatement of regional cross-border rail links needs to be ensured. Calls to further study and assess the possibility of establishing a European rolling stock pool and to continue discussions on how to implement this with the European Investment Bank (EIB) (paragraph 29).

The resolution calls on the Commission to monitor the implementation of bicycle carriages in cross-border passenger trains as provided for in the Rail Passengers' Rights Regulation (paragraph 35) and for further initiatives to encourage women into professions in the rail sector (paragraph 43).

On rail capacity, the resolution highlights the importance of the availability of rail infrastructure capacity to increasing rail's modal share and the need to improve the efficiency in capacity allocation (paragraphs 46 and 50). It encourages the Commission to use the 'connectivity index' it is currently developing for the precise identification of the infrastructure investment needed to secure the network effect (paragraph 48).

On track access charges, the European Parliament welcomes the Commission's upcoming plans to publish guidelines for setting track access charges and to encourage reduced track access charges on the set-up of cross-border services, as well as transparency in their calculation and call on the Commission to suggest recommendations for dedicated infrastructure charges for night trains in the upcoming Guidelines (paragraphs 51 and 52).

On ticketing and passengers' rights, the resolution calls for easy access to all rail offers and for appropriate protection for passengers in case of delays (paragraph 55), for rail tickets to provide information on the CO2 footprint (paragraph 56) and for continued monitoring compliance with the new Rail Passengers' Rights Regulation (paragraph 60).

On public service obligations (PSO), the European Parliament calls to improve the non-discriminatory market framework for commercially driven services and to ensure the continuity of cross-border services, warrant accessibility of destinations of interest, and maintain a dense, regular, reliable, and quality rail network (paragraphs 65 and 66).

The European Parliament also calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage young people to travel by train and attract them to professions in the rail sector (paragraph 67).

6. Response to requests and overview of action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission

Cross-border pilot services (paragraph 3)

On 31 January 2023, the Commission announced it would support 10 pilot services¹. No

¹ [Connecting Europe by train: 10 EU pilot services to boost cross-border rail \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-summaries/default/10-pilot-services-to-boost-cross-border-rail)

fresh financial resources will be made available and the Commission will support proposers with the elimination of cross-border barriers. Kick-off meetings to define milestones and a timeframe are under preparation.

Coordinated timetables (paragraph 14)

The assessment of market needs and the relative response by setting up rail services defined by operational and service characteristics is a responsibility for railway undertakings and/ or competent authorities. The Commission is aware of networks that have a long and positive experience with centrally co-ordinated (and often clockface) timetables and is at the same time aware that also other solutions can provide an adequate market response. Whatever model is used, compliance with EU legislation, notably concerning capacity allocation and open access, must be ensured. In this respect, the proposal to revise the framework for capacity management and allocation (see below), will allow infrastructure managers to better take into account the needs of cross-border rail traffic.

ERTMS (paragraph 5)

The Commission shares the Parliament's view that ERTMS should become a backbone of the digital rail system in Europe. ERTMS deployment should be coupled with a regulatory deadline for decommissioning of class B systems trackside, thus making it the only signalling system used in the Member States. Decommissioning of class B systems trackside will bring about significant maintenance savings for infrastructure managers, as deploying ERTMS and keeping additional trackside systems for a prolonged period is very costly and complicated. Class B systems should be removed in a coordinated way with a sufficient transitional period, allowing the railway undertakings to anticipate the change and adopt the most suitable migration strategy. ERTMS, being a system, requires a synchronised deployment both trackside and on-board and full system benefits only occur when both trains and trackside are equipped. Railway undertakings, especially freight operators but also international passenger operators, cannot be left alone with equipping their fleet. It is vital to provide improved support for the renewal of the fleet or the retrofitting of existing vehicles, whichever solution has a better benefit-cost ratio in a given context.

ERTMS already benefits from a significant level of EU support. This support must be preserved and even increased in order to reach the 2030 target for the ERTMS deployment on the core network set out in the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) Regulation and the envisaged new target for the ERTMS rollout on the entire TEN-T by 2040. However, the level of resources available at EU level hinges in first place on the willingness of Member States to provide appropriate funding. The Commission considers that EU funding should help mobilise other sources like national public and private funding and financing. Commission shares the view that the ERTMS governance should be strengthened. In this context the role of the European Coordinator for ERTMS should be enhanced as the coordinator should receive a prerogative to establish and chair a consultative forum. Each Member State should designate a national coordinator for ERTMS to attend such a forum. The national coordinator for ERTMS should become an ERTMS one stop-shop in each Member State. The national coordinator should be a direct discussion partner both for the European Coordinator and for their fellow colleagues from other countries.

TEN T (paragraphs 15 and 17)

The overall objective of the development of the trans-European network is to establish one multimodal Union wide network of high-quality standards. The Commission considers that the core network with a deadline of 2030 and the extended core network with a deadline of 2040 should constitute the foundation of the sustainable multimodal transport network, representing the strategically most important nodes and links of the trans-European transport network, according to traffic needs. They should stimulate the development of the entire comprehensive network and enable Union action to concentrate on those components of the trans-European transport network with the highest European added value, in particular cross-border sections, missing links, multimodal connecting points and major bottlenecks. The trans-European transport network shall strengthen the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union and contribute to the creation of a single European transport area which is sustainable, efficient and resilient and which increases the benefits for its users and supports inclusive growth.

TEN T Revision (paragraphs 5 and 8)

The Commission proposal for the revision of the TEN-T Regulation contains provision obliging Member States to perform a study to analyse the feasibility and economic relevance of higher speeds (i.e. 160 km/h and above), and to build or upgrade the line located on core or extended core network to such higher speed where its feasibility and economic relevance are demonstrated.

The Commission believes that the integration of the current Core Network Corridors and of the Rail Freight Corridors into ‘European Transport Corridors’ is needed to increase synergies between infrastructure planning and the operation of transport. The European Transport Corridors should become the instrument for the development of sustainable and multimodal freight and passenger transport flows in Europe and for the development of interoperable high-quality infrastructure and operational performance. As such, they should also be the tool to realise the vision of creating a highly competitive rail network across the Union with spilling out effects on the peripheral regions.

EU funding (paragraphs 18 and 19)

The Connecting Europe Facility is the main EU instrument dedicated to the financing of the TEN-T network. Despite its limited budget it can have an important leverage effect on both national public financing and private financing in favour of infrastructure investments with a high EU added value. In addition, other EU instruments, in particular the Cohesion policy Funds and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, are also supporting TEN-T projects. For instance, more than EUR 15 billion is dedicated to rail infrastructure projects on the TEN-T network under national recovery and resilience plans with Cohesion policy Funds adding another EUR 10.6 billion in 2021-2027.

On the need to improve the use of EU funds in favour of sustainable and efficient transport infrastructure, the Commission shares Parliament’s objective to improve as much as possible the use of the different EU instruments contributing to investments in transport infrastructure. It aims at ensuring both synergy and complementarity between those instruments. This is done in particular through appropriate guidance to Member States and in the Commission dialogue with them during programming processes.

Connection to Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova (paragraph 21)

The Commission is working closely with the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community Treaty to boost the development of rail transport in the Western Balkans. A dedicated Rail Action Plan has been prepared for the Western Balkans providing the basis for deeper integration with the EU rail market. It contributes to a rail system that is safe, inclusive, reliable, environmentally and socially sustainable, and inter-connected within the region. In addition, the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community is engaged in extending the concept of the Green Lanes to the Western Balkan region, which should support seamless connectivity at the borders between the EU and the region, as well as within the region.

Rolling stock (paragraphs 27 and 29)

To enable railway companies to acquire sufficient rolling stock to match the ambitions of the European Green Deal, the Commission and the EIB have coordinated financial instruments (Green Rail Investment Platform (GRIP of EIB) and InvestEU) and the Commission is supporting the ratification of the Luxembourg Protocol which helps investors securing their investments in rolling stock, globally. A new Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSI) facilitating the construction and deployment of “go-everywhere” passenger rolling stock, is an enabler for rolling stock leasing companies to set up multi-network rolling stock pools.

Bicycle carriages in cross border trains (paragraph 35)

The Commission will monitor the implementation by Member States of the Rail Passengers’ Rights Regulation, which will enter into application on 7 June 2023, including on new requirements for the carriage of bicycles on board the train as well as for public procurement procedures for new rolling stock and major upgrades to existing rolling stock.

Women in the rail sector (paragraph 43)

There are numerous initiatives to encourage women into professions in the rail sector. Action 70 of the Smart and Sustainable mobility strategy (SSMS) commits to launch initiatives to increase the attractiveness of the transport sector such as the ‘Women in Transport Platform’ and the ‘Ambassadors for Diversity in Transport’ network to encourage and exchange good practice

Rail capacity (paragraphs 46, 48 and 50)

The Commission shares the Parliament’s views on the issue of capacity allocation and is finalising the impact assessment for a legislative proposal, which will focus on amending the rules on capacity management and allocation. This proposal will be part of the Greening Freight Package. It will allow for more efficient planning and use of rail infrastructure capacity, improve the efficiency of the process of allocation, and provide for better coordination of rail paths across the Member States. Cross-border passenger services and freight traffic will gain better access to the rail network and will be the greatest beneficiaries of this initiative.

The Commission has performed a feasibility study for developing a rail connectivity index. The index developed in that process assesses railway services. For infrastructure planning, the Commission closely cooperated with Member States and other tools are available.

Track access charges (paragraphs 51 and 52)

Work is underway in PRIME (Platform of Rail Infrastructure Managers in Europe) and the Commission intends to adopt the guidelines in the fourth quarter of 2023.

Multimodal digital mobility services (MDMS) (paragraphs 55, 56 and 57)

The MDMS proposal aims to facilitate access to all tickets; will facilitate cooperation between MDMS and operators and establish a level playing field for operators to be displayed on platforms. It will also look at means to provide information on greenhouse gases emissions through MDMS.

Rail passengers' rights (paragraphs 55 and 60)

The Commission will monitor the implementation by Member States of the Rail Passengers' Rights Regulation, which will enter into application on 7 June 2023, including on the new rules encouraging the use of through-tickets and ensuring the protection of passengers having such tickets in the event of delays and missed connections.

The Commission will continue to monitor the implementation by Member States of the Rail Passengers' Rights Regulation, which will enter into application on 7 June 2023.

Public service obligations (PSO) (paragraphs 65 and 66)

The Commission welcomes that the resolution stresses the importance of strengthening the open-access market framework that was decided by the European legislator in the 4th Railway Package in view of promoting competitive long-distance and cross-border rail passenger services meeting the needs of the population. The Commission agrees that where market operators cannot provide the desired services awarding public service contracts can be an effective means to ensure the provision of the desired quantity and quality of rail transport services. Before granting such contracts, competent authorities should assess the demand for the public transport services and conduct a market analysis to determine to what extent market operators can provide the desired rail services. If the provision of desired international rail passenger services does not receive the agreement of all Member States concerned, they can be provided on a hybrid basis (i.e. partly in an open-access, partly on the basis of a public service contract). However, it is for Member States to ensure that such services do not distort competition and, in particular, that there is no cross-subsidisation between the compensated and commercial legs of the journey.

Empowering youth (paragraph 67)

The Commission has developed educational toolkits to challenge learners in primary and secondary schools to identify and question gender stereotypes and discover career opportunities in the transport sector, including in the rail sector. These toolkits show that the opportunities on offer within the rapidly changing transport sector are not restricted to a particular gender. The toolkits are available in 24 languages, for use in all EU Member States.