

Violeta Bulc, European Commissioner for Transport

PUTTING EUROPEAN RAIL ON THE FAST TRACK TO SUCCESS



The journey to strengthen the rail sector in Europe continues. Part of my job as European Commissioner for Transport is to ensure a competitive, sustainable and decarbonised transport system, which is well integrated and capable of serving the needs of businesses and passengers. Rail is an important element, providing a clean, safe and comfortable transportation system. At the same time, there is always scope for improvements.

In network industries such as rail, regulation and competition go hand in hand. The benefits of competition can only be fostered if the rules of the game are clear. This requires a predictable, transparent, and fair regulatory framework, which can boost competitiveness of the operators and the confidence of investors.

In order to become global leaders, European Railway companies have much more to do,

both in terms of responsiveness to customer needs and in embracing innovation. Innovation should not simply concern the vital areas of new technology and digitalisation, but we also need innovative business models that will support connectivity of rail with other modes of transport. Railway companies embracing these challenges can become global leaders.

In this regard, reforming the rail sector with the 4th Railway Package was one of my top priorities of my mandate. Since its adoption last year, we are fully focused on its implementation and enforcement, so that it starts delivering its objectives. Member States need to assure a timely transposition of legislative texts that aim to complete the Single Market for Rail Area. The overarching goal of the 4th Railway Package is to revitalise the rail sector as well as making it more competitive vis-à-vis other modes of transport. For example, the new EU rules will replace 11.000 national rules concerning the railway sector.

While having the right regulatory environment is important, so is investment. The EU has made available significant funding for the rail sector under the various programmes of the European Union. Efficient use of public funding to leverage other sources notably from the private sector is essential to satisfy the investment needs with scarce public resources.

EU financial mechanisms focus on projects with highest EU value added and contribute to the realisation of the flagship cross-border infrastructures which are of crucial importance for the completion of the TEN-T network.

Currently EU funding mechanisms available to the railway sector come from a variety of sources. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) has a grant budget of EUR 24.05 billion for TEN-T projects for the 2014-2020 period. Till now 3,89 billion has been allocated to the railway sector. Additionally various rail projects have also been approved under the European Fund for Strategic Investments, as part of the so-called Juncker Investment Plan.

Rail projects	EIB contribution, supported by EFSI
CITYJET REGIONAL ROLLING STOCK	EUR 500 million
TRENITALIA REGIONAL ROLLING STOCK	EUR 300 million
PRZEWOZY REGIONAL ROLLING STOCK MODERNISATION	PLN 200 million (EUR 46 million)

Ultimately, the overarching objective of European transport policy is to improve the competitiveness and environmental sustainability of our transport system. However, several challenges faced by the European Union and the wider world still need to be tackled: rising traffic demand, congestion, security of energy supply and climate change.

Tackling these challenges will require the railway sector to take on a larger share of transport demand in the next few decades. The European Commission is working towards the creation of a Single European Railway Area and promotes a modal shift from road to rail, also called Shift2Rail, in order to achieve a more competitive and resource-efficient transport system.

Although strengthening the rail sector is one of our key priorities, the answer to these challenges also lies in concentrating on the big picture. Our vision is indeed to deliver single

integrated multimodal transport system, improving the integration of all modes in the EU transport system. Multimodality is about breaking down barriers that currently exist between all modes of transport and about creating synergies between transport modes and across borders. Multimodality can help in reducing congestion, thus making the system more efficient and innovative but also cleaner.

I have declared 2018 as the year of multimodality and my services are working on a series of proposals to ensure we have a seamless, integrated transport system in Europe going forward. The EU must embrace and stimulate these opportunities both with policy action and with investment support. We therefore continue to work to provide more efficient, user-friendly and cost-effective railways as well as access to better mobility and environmentally-friendly options for our citizens and businesses.

