



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

Directorate B - Investment, Innovative & Sustainable Transport  
**The Director**

Brussels, 12 October 2020  
MOVE/ARES(2020)6060971

Mr Mário LOPES  
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Mr Henrique NETO  
[henriquejosesusaneto@gmail.com](mailto:henriquejosesusaneto@gmail.com)

Dear Mr Lopes,  
Dear Mr Neto,

I acknowledge receipt of your second letter to Commissioner Vălean of 21 September. Commissioner Vălean asked me to reply on her behalf.

As stated in the reply to your first letter, interoperability of rail within the Iberian Peninsula and with the rest of the EU is of high importance to the European Commission. Article 39.2.a (iv) of the TEN-T Regulation implies that the new high-speed lines between Lisbon and Madrid, Lisbon and Porto and Aveiro and Salamanca have to be constructed in UIC gauge. This may be achieved through the intermediate step of equipment with polyvalent sleepers and the later shifting to UIC gauge. With the provisions of the current TEN-T Regulation, Portugal is thus not becoming a rail island due to the Iberian gauge and the border crossings with Spain that are part of the core TEN-T network are guaranteeing the interconnection with the rest of the European rail network. The gradual transition from the Iberian gauge to the UIC gauge needs strong coordination between the two countries and the approach followed in Portugal is designed to maintain interoperability with Spain.

The Commission is fully aware of the investments that are being made in the Portuguese rail network. Moreover, given that the most significant works that are underway on the core TEN-T network in Portugal are co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility, the fulfilment of all relevant European Regulations is being scrutinised.

Regarding your specific question about the certification of Iberian gauge, let me clarify that the Technical Specifications for Interoperability relating to Infrastructure (TSI Infra) consider four different possible gauges in the EU, one of them being the Iberian gauge (see <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R1299>). According to the Interoperability Directive, the so-called Notified Body (NoBo) verifies the infrastructure against these TSI. The result of the verification is the “NoBo EC Certificate” issued by the NoBo as part of the authorisation process of the infrastructure. The certificate does not imply that the gauge is considered as interoperable with the UIC

gauge. It implies that the characteristics of the infrastructure are in line with those of the TSI. The term interoperability in the Interoperability Directive is defined as the ability of a rail system to allow the safe and uninterrupted movement of trains which accomplish the required levels of performance.

As already stated in the reply to your first letter, please rest assured that we are pursuing all efforts, including through co-funding, to ensure the interoperability of rail within the Iberian Peninsula and with the rest of the EU, in line with the applicable Regulations and with a high degree of dedication and coordination from both the Portuguese and Spanish Governments and Infrastructure Managers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Herald Ruijters', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

Herald RUIJTERS