

Dear Ms Adina Valean

Commissioner for Transportation

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Lisboa, 18 October 2020

**Subject: risk of Isolation of the Portuguese economy – clarification of the vrail component of the TEN-T in Portugal**

Dear Commissioner Adina Valean: we would like to thank you for your letter dated 12 October 2020, that Mr Herald Ruijters wrote to us on your behalf.

We thank you for your answer to the question of our first letter: “The certificate does not imply that the gauge is considered as interoperable with the UIC gauge”. This is a very clear statement, we appreciate that very much, indeed. But we would like to understand what are the practical consequences of this: given that

1. the EU regulation 1315/2013 clearly states that the lines of the Core Network must be in UIC gauge.
2. the use of polyvalent sleepers, on its own, is no guarantee that the rail gauge will be changed from Iberian to UIC gauge. As you know this process implies that single lines cannot be operated during the works to change the position of the rails and replacement of switches and other equipments. Double lines will have their capacity reduced, probably more than 10 times, during that period. This may be unfeasible if the indirect costs, this is, the impact on the economy, is very strong due to lack of competitive and environmentally acceptable alternatives.
3. the official documents and statements of the portuguese Government show that there is no coordination with Spain nor intention of starting the introduction of the UIC gauge in the portuguese rail network before 2030 (nor afterwards, according to members of the Government and the railway manager, as we showed in our previous letter, dated 21 September 2020).

can you please let us know if the costs of the construction and upgrading of lines of the Atlantic Corridor of the EU Core Network in Portugal in Iberian gauge are eligible to be co-financed by CEF?

We also ask you to

- i) reaffirm the convenience of meeting the objective of building the Atlantic Corridor in UIC gauge by 2030 to the Portuguese Government and, mainly, to the portuguese public opinion.
- ii) avoid the waste of resources in solutions, namely single lines, that don't serve the future needs of the portuguese economy and are incompatible with EU policies to transfer freight transportation in long distances (>300km) from the roads to rail and maritime transport. When the Atlantic Corridor is finished all lines should be double track, in UIC gauge, and competitive for both passenger traffic (high speed, as you refer in your letter dated 21 September 2020) and freight.
- iii) consider the above in the analysis of the Resilience and Recovery Plan the portuguese Government presented to the EU Commission a few days ago.

With best regards

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