

European trains on the track

The Congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party convening in Dublin, Ireland, on 2-4 June 2022:

Believing that:

- European citizens are more and more aware that energy transition and the fight against global warming are inseparable, and call for a coordinated, determined, rapid and wide-ranging response at European level to change our modes of transport change our modes of transport and incentivise sustainable mobility;
- sustainable mobility includes measures such as home office solutions and the increased use of modern means of communication in order to reduce work-related traffic in particular. In order to reach cost reflectiveness in air traffic and incentivise sustainable means of transport, substantial and internationally coordinated efforts are necessary;
- rail transport is of critical importance in contributing to the greenhouse gas emissions and to offer comfortable, fast, and efficient ways to reach short to long distance destinations.

Noting that:

- public transport is rather well-developed in metropolitan areas (metro, tramways, bus, etc.) in most large cities in Europe, but their interconnection is an issue, especially when cities are merging into metropolises or when transnational urban areas would require more consistent technical and commercial offerings like multimodal journeys, bicycle lanes, digitalised ticketing, and new forms of mobility. It needs to be ensured that public transport is as accessible as possible for everyone, notably people with disabilities;
- in order to make public transport as attractive as possible, appropriate investments to guarantee the safety of all people using public transport are a necessity;
- inter-regional and international freight railways have been used mostly to transport raw materials and fossil fuel products. More and more companies are reviewing their supply chain to switch from road to rail transport, but European infrastructures and freight offerings should be developed to provide them with a real alternative to road transport, both for more diversified types of products and with intermodal solutions such as piggybacking;
- trains have multiple electrification voltages and different signalling systems. Several track gauge standards co-exist and prevent the provision of seamless lines;

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- ticketing is mostly developed at the national or regional level and there is no consistent ticketing system nor policy. As a result, there is a very limited supply of reservation systems that integrate these different offers.

State that:

- interconnected rail networks within a region or across regions are necessary to develop urban transport, consistent inter-regional offerings for passengers and piggybacking for freight as alternatives to road transport.

Calls on the ALDE Party and its member organisations to promote a European rail transport policy as described below:

- the establishment of competences of the European railway authority to supervise the negotiation and development of a European high-speed railway network connecting the major cities and urban regions in the European Union, and exploring possibilities beyond Union territory;
- European regions must be accessible, which implies better maintained and extended rail networks, and access should not be limited to the major routes;
- the quality of public transport in urban areas should be ensured in all major cities, primarily through metros and trams, with more transport networks and a broad use of all sustainable public transport means including metro, tramways, buses, bicycles and new forms of mobility; furthermore, walking and cycling should not be forgotten as the most efficient way of travel within a city and should be supported with better walkways, bicycle lanes and free crossings;
- the development of secondary railway lines in rural areas, where appropriate, is required to complement road or air on-demand transport;
- in order to make public transport as attractive as possible, appropriate investments to guarantee the safety of all people using public transport are needed; the accessibility of public transport for everyone, notably people with disabilities, also needs to be ensured;
- the standardisation of railway gauges must be carried out progressively and as a priority on the European axes between Member States;
- a passenger who wants to freely and timely cross Europe should count on an integrated system of transport and be able to easily buy a ticket online that takes into account the full route from point-to-point, which integrates the different media of transport necessary to that aim. In principle, this should be enabled by creating data accessibility for all transport companies and service providers in order to ensure the possibility trans-national multimodal ticketing;

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- developing a European-wide night train rail network as a sustainable alternative transport mean with an attractive and affordable comfort level to facilitate carbon-free interconnectivity in Europe as well as to that supports the consciousness of European citizenship and rail tourism;
- along the major rail routes through the European Union continuous high speed internet access should become the norm, so that travel time can be used as working time when one wants;
- promote rail passenger rights;
- gradual decarbonisation of long-distance means of transport requires the development of even more high-speed rail routes and if possible; very high speed rail routes (such as existing Transrapid technology or Hyperloop using electromagnetic levitation and vacuum tube technologies).

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