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Public transport

Boosting support for railways and public services in the Danube and Adriatic regions

Following a question, initiated by Green MEPs Michael Cramer and Davor Skrlec, from the European Parliament's transport and tourism committee, European Commissioner for regional policy, Corina Crețu last week responded during the plenary session to concerns on the situation of railways and public services in the Danube and Adriatic regions*.

Commenting on Commissioner Crețu's statements, **Michael Cramer** said:

“Europe’s railways are a vital backbone to the public transport network and play a major role in reducing the polluting emissions from road transport. We asked for Ms Crețu’s input because of recent worrying developments in some countries, where for example rail infrastructure such as lines or stations are being closed down even though the EU has been investing huge amounts into these networks. With the EU having only a few months ago in Paris reaffirmed its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, there is evidence that some member states are reallocating EU funding to unsustainable modes of transport such as roads. This is especially disappointing given the cohesion and regional funds are already biased towards road rather than rail investment. The Commission needs to make it clear to the member states that this is unacceptable.

I criticized the fact that Romania intends to deactivate up to 40% of its railway network and also asked the Commissioner why some member states are biased in their approach to transport data, for example, identical data on use of road and rail can lead to totally opposite results. For example, rail line A might carry the same annual number of travellers as road B, and yet this may be judged insufficient to justify the existence of the rail line, while the road’s continued existence is never in doubt. However, a good rail infrastructure is an invaluable public service.”

MEP **Davor Skrlec** said:

“The Commission must seize the day and change its focus from road to sustainable modes of transport such as rail. This must entail a change of tack in allocation of funding in the regional, cohesion, CEF and EFSI funds from road to rail infrastructure, and better absorption of cohesion funds for railway infrastructure projects. With climate change and its disastrous effects increasingly evident year on year and with the recent revelations on the car emissions scandal and the resulting impact on public health, now is the time to invest in low carbon modes of transport. The railways provide an excellent opportunity to contribute to achieving CO2

emission targets as well as reducing the numbers of deaths and injuries on Europe's roads.

In addition to this, these vast regions would benefit hugely from a cross-border coherently integrated and genuinely intermodal public transport system. The resulting "network effect" could also be key to developing high quality eco-tourism and drawing new visitors. It is the interconnections in particular that play a crucial role, increasing the possibility for a customer to travel by public transport from door-to-door, which would almost certainly lead to increased demand for public transport. Development of new RFCs (Railway Freight Corridors) from Adriatic-Ionian ports to Central and Eastern Europe are important for the EU's overall transport and climate policy and contribute to the transport policy pillars of Danube and Adriatic-Ionian Macroregions.

We also call on the Commission to be more transparent and provide a full overview of all EU co-financed rail infrastructure that has been dismantled or abandoned and to publish an annual list of co-financed railway projects in these regions."

* These regions comprise EU member states: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Slovenia, as well as the following accession or non-EU countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine.

Background information:

[Written question](#) on the Fourth Railway Package by Maria Grapini (E-008674/2015)

European Parliament [report](#) on an EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region

[European strategy for the Danube region](#)

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