



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 21. 10. 2013
C(2013) 6964 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senát for its Opinion concerning the 4th railway package {COM(2013) 25_26_27_28_29_30_31 final}.

The Commission shares the view of the Senát that increased competition on passenger rail services will lead to benefits in terms of fares, service quality and frequency of train services, that the award of public service contracts should as a matter of principle be based on public tender procedures ensuring benefits for public finances and passengers and that reinforced clear rules on the governance of infrastructure will level the playing field for new entrants and prevent discriminatory practices. The Commission also welcomes the calls of the Senát for further harmonisation of technical specifications of interoperability, development of ERTMS and the clarification and simplification of safety administrative procedures.

The Commission agrees that public service obligations in public transport should be defined in a manner that is financially sustainable in the long run. For this reason, the Commission has proposed a criterion in this sense in its proposal amending Regulation 1370/2007 concerning the definition of public service obligations.

On the other hand, the Commission would like to reassure the Senát that it also believes that a progressive opening up of the award of railway public services contracts to public tendering is most beneficial to the railway sector as a whole. The Commission has therefore proposed in the 4th railway package a gradual phasing out of directly awarded public service contracts till the end of 2022.

Furthermore, as regards the right of Member States to decide on rail vehicle homologation, the Commission would like to underline that it firmly believes that the Single European Rail Area can only be achieved through a reinforcement of the coordinating role of the European Railway Agency: national safety authorities would of course retain a vital input to rail safety.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concerns raised by the Senát and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

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