



Press Release
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Small and medium-sized railways share their concerns about the Commission's approach to market opening

The CEOs of railway operators in small and medium-sized European countries met with the Commissioner for Transport, Vice-President Siim Kallas, and his team to share their common concern on the Commission's approach to liberalize domestic railway passenger markets. The sector representatives underlined that there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach applied to market opening. Instead, the decisions on how to award public service contracts should be taken by the responsible national authorities. Following this meeting, CEOs also met members of the European Parliament at a lunch debate hosted by the MEP Saïd El Khadraoui (S&D, BE). The participants exchanged views on how to meet the objectives of an efficient and innovative railway sector from a customer perspective.

The European Commission released its proposal for the 4th Railway Package on 30 January 2013. Among others the goal of the Commission is to harmonize procedures for interoperability and safety, to implement stricter governance scheme for integrated railways as well as to liberalize domestic railway passenger markets. In this context, eight CEOs of national railways from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland met with Vice-President Kallas and his team from the EU Commission to share the concerns about a one-size-fits-all approach to market opening, a view that has already been expressed by the **Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER)**.

The Transport Commissioner expressed his view that European railways urgently need to streamline processes for safety certifications and vehicle authorizations. He indicated that the Commission is convinced that the work on interoperability is the key cornerstone to bringing forward benefits for the European railway sector. Regarding market opening the Commission showed some willingness to discuss possible alternative solutions to the issues raised by small and medium-sized railways and asked for a continuation of the debate with operators and the CER in order to help finding alternative solutions to achieve the Commission's objectives.

The high level representatives of the eight railway companies urged Vice-President Kallas as well as members of the European Parliament to acknowledge the significant differences between member states, for example with regards to traffic density, size and geography across member states, the financial framework for infrastructure investments, labour market conditions or the existing level of government intervention in place.

This fact was acknowledged during the lunch debate by the leading member of the European Parliament on the issue of liberalization, **MEP Mathieu Grosch (EPP, BE)**: *"The Commission has proposed a one-size-fits-all approach which is not flexible enough to take the different specificities of the countries and regions into consideration. The competent authorities must play a more*



important role and have the tools to provide the services under optimal and efficient conditions.”

MEP Saïd El Khadraoui (S&D, BE) added that “member states have different experiences with the process of market opening, and therefore competent national authorities should be given enough flexibility to organize their network in such a way that an optimal mix of open access services and services performed under public service contracts can be achieved in order to ensure a high quality of services for all passengers”.

CER, representing interest of the vast majority of EU passenger railway undertakings, will continue to closely monitor the further developments of the 4th Railway Package and contribute to a fruitful and open discussion on how to best meet the expectations of both the Commission and stakeholders, having in mind customers' needs.

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