

Letter of Prime Ministers / Presidents of Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Czechia to the President of the European Commission on the European high-speed rail network and its financing

Dear Madam President,

We are writing to you concerning the development of the transport network in the European Union, which is the main prerequisite for a competitive and well-functioning Internal Market, economic growth, and prosperity. It is also one of the key factors in the current geopolitical situations and an important tool for support to our partners committed to become part of the EU.

The revision of Trans-European Transport (TEN-T) Policy, which has crucial strategic importance, entered into force last summer. The development of the TEN-T policy, especially the completion of the European Transport Corridors within the agreed deadlines, is the pivotal cornerstone for the sustainable, smart and resilient European transport network. The regulation addresses the modernisation of the entire network, quality standards as well as the missing links and bottlenecks in transport infrastructure along the network.

We are fully committed to implement these goals and the requirements to modernise the existing infrastructure for the carriage of passengers and goods by rail. We welcome that new high-speed railway connections have been included in the so-called TEN-T revision, particularly in the regions, where these connections are yet to be built and where they will contribute to further improve the transport connectivity.

We endorse the objectives of the Commission as referred in the Mission letter of Commissioner Tzitzikostas to prepare the action plan for European high-speed rail network connecting the capitals and the regions while having in mind the importance of cross-border projects. We encourage the Commission together with Member States to prioritise work on flagship projects with high European added value.

Furthermore, we support the findings of Enrico Letta's and Mario Draghi's reports on the European Union Single Market and on the future of European Competitiveness that the lack of high-speed rail connections and the risk of incompleteness of the cross-border links among major cities of different countries are considered a major stumbling block of the well-function Internal Market and thus the competitiveness of the European Union.

Moreover, completion of the European Transport Corridors through development of the new high-speed rail connections linking the capitals and major cities across the European Union will significantly contribute to the decarbonisation of the transport sector at the European level while strengthening the resilience of the European Union, inter alia for the needs of Military Mobility.

To implement our shared goals and to turn plans into large-scale construction phase, with significant participation of European industry, sufficient financial resources and development of new instruments, such as bridge financing, are needed. Many of our projects are already in the construction phase or in the final stage of preparation to be implemented in coming years, early of the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework, in order to contribute to the 2030 targets defined in the TEN-T regulation.

The Draghi report highlights the challenge of attracting private capital to major infrastructure projects due to their lengthy lead times and long wait for return on investment. We do explore alternative ways of financing, and we count on strong support of the European Investment Bank policy to accomplish our objectives. However, and without pre-empting the next Multiannual Financial Framework, we

would like to underline, that EU co-financing of those connections in the next financial period is absolutely essential and indispensable.

Therefore, let us stress that the financing of high-speed rail connections linking the capitals and major cities across the European Union, especially between different Member States, and the development of transport infrastructure as such is one of our priorities for the next Multiannual Financial Framework. We strongly advocate robust centrally managed CEF III of increased financial ambition which would be a catalyst for the development of a fully-fledged TEN-T Network, including the missing high-speed rail connections and the completion of major cross-border projects. At the same, we should keep the synergies of transport, energy, digital and defence sector.

To accomplish those goals, we should concentrate on continuous work to reduce the administrative burden and in any case avoid imposing excessive conditionalities to implement these projects, like the ones used under the Resilience and Recovery Fund. Development of the large scale and cross-border projects requires significant procedural demands and reforms. It demands effective coordination and synchronised timelines among the participating Member States, ensuring the seamless functioning of the Single Market. Requiring additional conditionalities could result in delays of the connections and hamper the completion of the TEN-T network within the agreed deadlines.

Sincerely Yours

Petr Fiala

Prime Minister of Czechia

Gitanas Nausėda

President of Lithuania

Kristen Michal

Prime Minister of Estonia

Luís Montenegro

Prime Minister of Portugal

Kyriakos Mitsotakis

Prime Minister of Greece

Klaus Werner Iohannis

President of Romania

Viktor Orbán

Prime Minister of Hungary

Robert Fico

Prime Minister of Slovakia

Georgia Meloni

Prime Minister of Italy

Pedro Sánchez

Prime Minister of Spain

Erika Siliņa

Prime Minister of Latvia