

EN
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Answer given by Ms Bulc
on behalf of the Commission
(2.8.2016)

The Commission shares the overall position of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) according to which the performance of rail freight transport in Europe remains unsatisfactory. Rail freight has a key role to play in the transport system of the future and is part of the Commission's strategy to decarbonize transport. The Commission has taken various initiatives to reverse this situation but strong political will is also needed from the Member States. The Commission detailed replies to the ECA findings and recommendations are available on pages 71-85 of the report¹.

The Honourable Members refers to the specific situation of the new highspeed railway link between Spain and France on the cross-border section Figueres – Perpignan. The problem arises only in respect to freight transport and not as regards passenger transport. The European Coordinator for the Mediterranean Corridor set up a dedicated working group earlier this year which is currently addressing the issue.

In the Connecting Europe Facility Call 2014, EU co-financing has been granted to Spain and France to overcome shortcomings of rail freight connections. First and foremost, Spain is implementing the standard European railway gauge between Valencia and Barcelona to allow interoperable railway services to France. EU co-funding has been granted to France to build the Lyon-Turin base tunnel, the key section to fully implement the Mediterranean Corridor. But grants have also been made available to solve railway capacity issues in the Lyon agglomeration to finalise the by-pass of Nîmes-Montpellier and to complete the studies for the missing Montpellier-Perpignan section of the Mediterranean corridor.

¹ "Rail freight transport in the EU: still not on the right track"; Special report N°08/2016; European Court of Auditors; http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR16_08/SR_RAIL_FREIGHT_EN.pdf