

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on Petitions

25.09.2009

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition 0786/2007 by Paolo Prieri (Italian), on behalf of Upper Sangone Valley Anti-High-Speed Rail Link Committee, objecting to the Turin-Lyons high-speed trans-European rail link

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner, on behalf of another committee opposing the above project sets out the principal arguments of the petitions tabled by the Susa Valley Anti-High-Speed Rail Link Committee and provides an update of the situation following the fact-finding mission (in November 2005) by the Committee on Petitions. In particular, he refers to the creation of a European technical negotiating observatory, a proposed alternative to the original route encompassing the Sangone Valley to the south-west of Turin and its detrimental effects on the environment, landscape, economy and tourism. He is accordingly seeking a change of course towards an ecologically sustainable European transport policy based on actual rail freight traffic volumes in the European Union and involving the local communities in its implementation

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 8 January 2008. Information requested from Commission under Rule 192(4).

3. Commission reply, received on 10 June 2008.

The existing rail link between Lyon and Turin is underused, partly because of upgrading works that the historic line is undergoing. These will be finished in the course of 2009. However, this line will always be limited in capacity and also be limited in appeal to potential clients, because of difficult climate conditions and other operational difficulties of the line.

The new rail link will provide a much more attractive connection. With its high capacity, this rail line will link east and west, and further integrate the European economy. If it was not built, the number of lorries crossing the Alps is likely to increase significantly, which in turn will damage the fragile ecosystem of the Alps. The petitioner rightly points out that the new rail link should be accompanied by a voluntary policy of modal shift by the governments involved. Progress is being made in that direction by involved governments.

In order to foster co-ordination for this important project, the Commission nominated a co-ordinator for the project, Mr. L.J. Brinkhorst. The Italian government has taken great care to involve all stakeholders in the Technical Observatory led by its President M. Virano. Among these are all local authorities representing the public interest of Susa Valley. The Observatory meets once a week with full involvement of all concerned parties. The hydrological and other environmental risks will be fully assessed. Before any works on the rail line in the Susa Valley or the Val Sangone will start, a full Environmental Impact Assessment will be carried out, as required under European and Italian legislation. The definition of the alignment is prepared by the Technical Observatory, with the democratic consent of its stakeholders. So far, no decision on the alignment has been taken.

Conclusion

The Commission notes that up to date, no decision on an alignment has been taken, and options are being considered within the Observatory. The Italian government will decide on the alignment, acting on the advice of the Observatory.

The Commission is confident that the ultimate decision of the Italian government will take due account of the needs for an efficient transport system, environmental protection and economic development.

4. Commission reply, received on 25 September 2009 for petitions 949/2003, 523/2004, 198/2005 and 786/2007.

As of August 2009, works on the new Lyon-Turin railway connection are still in the preparatory phase. Work on construction of the tunnel itself have not yet begun either in France or in Italy; completion of the preparatory phase for engineering works requires some additional preparatory studies, including some further environmental impact assessment work. Four exploratory tunnels form part of the preparation of the construction phase of the tunnel - three on the French side and one on the Italian. Two of the three exploratory tunnels in France have been completed and the last one will be finished in the autumn of this year. Work on the Italian exploratory tunnel has not yet begun, pending formal agreement on the alignment on that side. It is likely that civil engineering works on the Italian exploratory tunnel could begin in the first half of 2010.