

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2907/01

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to the Commission

Subject: Lyon-Turin transalpine link

The Essen summit of December 1994 adopted a European programme of 14 priority infrastructure projects, including the Lyon-Turin transalpine link, which forms part of the Lyon-Turin-Trieste link. It was stated at the same summit that this link would come into service by 2010. Numerous measures and surveys, as well as the constant support of the European Union, enabled the Italian and French states to decide in a clear and irreversible fashion on the implementation of this new high-capacity goods and passenger railway link. This decision, which ties in very well with the political vision of this assembly, was favourably received. However, the report delivered by the intergovernmental committee and distributed after the summit, and the official documents signed on 29 January 2001, still contain elements of uncertainty which should be clarified as soon as possible.

The first of these is the projected date for implementation of the work. We must remember the date set at Essen and try to come as close to it as possible. All the studies carried out to date note that the existing rail line has reached saturation point, and take the view that a deadline of 2015 is too distant in the light of the genuine needs for a modal rebalancing of transalpine transport. However, the abovementioned documents unfortunately still contain a number of uncertainties as regards the date for final completion of the work and set out a programme of surveys and studies which are clearly scheduled to run beyond 2015. This is entirely unacceptable, given that 10 years have already been devoted to surveys and studies, and that the European Union has underlined the urgent need to find solutions to the problems of transalpine transport as early as possible.

Secondly, the two governments have postponed until 2006 the choice between full completion of the line and completion in two stages (first one tube, then the second), although the studies already carried out show clearly that the full approach is the most cost-effective, the safest and the one that will cause the least pollution to the alpine valleys.

Finally, these documents make no reference to any kind of financial engineering study envisaging a mixed public-sector, private-sector approach, which runs entirely counter to the provisions of the new financial regulation approved by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament in June 1999 (Regulation 1655/1999¹). This is a serious shortcoming which reveals a lack of understanding on the part of those responsible of the fundamental principles underlying Europe's political will. If this lack of understanding continued, with wrong references, for example, being used, the granting of Community subsidies at the most favourable rate would be placed in jeopardy.

The European Union and its bodies clearly have a key role to play in the realisation of this important project both from the financial point of view and from that of meeting the objectives. Could the Commission therefore state its position on these three points, which are fundamental to the success of this major project forming part of the construction of Europe?

¹ OJ L 197, 29.7.1999, p. 1.