

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3909/08
by Peter Skinner (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Safeguarding consumers' rights with respect to trans-national rail services

In November 2007, Eurostar, the sole provider of rail services between continental Europe and the United Kingdom, unilaterally cut the direct service between Brussels and Ashford International station, despite pleas from consumers supported by their local, national and EU representatives to maintain the service. A petition of over 15,000 names was presented to the British Government on 6 July 2007, less than six months after its launch, calling for the service to be maintained.

Until November 2007, there were eight direct services a day between Ashford International and Brussels, serving consumers in the south and south-east of the United Kingdom, many of which stopped also in Lille. Now there are none.

In the light of the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs' participation in the European Economic and Social Committee's Consumer Day on 14 March and the actions taken by Eurostar towards consumers of its services:

Can the Commission inform Parliament how consumers of this important trans-national rail service linking the continent to one of the EU's largest Member States can ensure their voice is heard and their rights are respected given that Eurostar enjoys a monopoly position in the provision of these rail services?

Given the range of issues surrounding Eurostar, its monopoly position and the impact its unilateral actions have had on consumers, can the Commissioner confirm that this should be a matter for urgent inter-service consideration within the Commission?