

**Question for written answer E-4145/2010
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Catherine Grèze (Verts/ALE), Sonia Alfano (ALDE), Joe Higgins (GUE/NGL), Luigi de Magistris (ALDE), Gianni Vattimo (ALDE) and Eva Lichtenberger (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Economic and environmental unsustainability of high-speed rail networks (TEN-T) and need for a real public debate at EU level

The Commission is promoting rail transport in the EU through TEN-T projects by granting large financial contributions to the Member States.

Several independent studies have shown that implementing and managing high-speed rail lines is not cost effective without the public support granted by the EU and the Member State in which the high-speed line is built.

Modernising, maintaining and upgrading existing rail lines are the most acceptable alternatives from the environmental and cost points of view.

The Green Paper on the future of the TEN-T provided for consultation, which concluded on 30 April 2009 without interested members of the public or their associations or movements having been able to take part.

The public debates held in France presented incorrect data, overestimating the amount of traffic and underestimating the funding, which completely distorted the debates on whether new lines should be built. A public consultation is currently under way for the Italian part of priority project 6, Lyon-Turin. It has excluded citizens and institutions (local authorities and communities from mountain areas) from the debate if they had not already declared themselves in favour of the project. This flouts the provisions of the Aarhus Convention on public participation when all options and solutions are still open.

1. Is the Commission aware that constructing these high-speed rail lines is, from an economic and environmental perspective, unsustainable for the EU and the Member States since, instead of improving competitiveness, saving energy and reducing CO2 emissions, it will increase public debt and CO2 emissions and pass on undue costs to users and taxpayers?

2. How does the Commission intend to set about completing these rail lines in the absence of a real democratic debate at local level in the EU and the Member States?

3. Does the Commission consider it necessary to open, in a uniform manner, a public debate on the model for transport and social development of land that underlies the development of high-speed lines?