

**Question for written answer E-005988/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
François Alfonsi (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Funding for the Lyon-Turin high-speed rail link project

In legislative proposal 2011/0302 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), the Commission estimated that approximately EUR 500 billion would be needed in order to complete the trans-European transport networks by 2020, of which EUR 250 billion would have to be spent on completing missing sections and eliminating bottlenecks in the core network. Among the projects selected in 2011, EUR 37.69 billion was allocated to the Lyon-Turin high-speed rail link, which forms part of the Mediterranean corridor.

On 8 February 2013, the Heads of State and Government decided unanimously to impose drastic cuts – for the first time in EU history – on the EU budget, and in particular on funding for transport under the CEF (-39.37%). The Commission's original proposal of EUR 21 694 billion was thus reduced to EUR 13 174 billion, excluding any support from the Cohesion Fund. This means that not all of the projects selected by the Commission in 2011 can be funded, and that the indicative rate of 40% for non-Cohesion-Fund countries will have to be revised downwards if a meaningful number of new infrastructure projects are to be financed.

The Lyon-Turin project was one of the pre-selected projects. It would entail boring a base tunnel 57 km long and several other tunnels at various points along the track. This had previously been considered preferable to upgrading existing railway lines. The investment required was put at EUR 12 billion in 2002; however, that figure was subsequently revised upwards to EUR 26 billion – or more than double the original sum – by the French Court of Auditors in January 2010. A number of studies from the 1990s and 2000s setting out 30-year forecasts of increases in road traffic and economic growth in Alpine regions of Europe have all proven to be inaccurate. Upgrading existing railway lines would therefore seem to be a much more realistic approach to this problem, and just as effective.

A total of 23 million tonnes of freight are transported along this route, of which 3.4 million tonnes go by rail. The railway line, meanwhile, has a capacity of 20 million tonnes, so there is considerable scope for expanding rail freight services.

1. Has the Commission set the growing cost of the Lyon-Turin project against the low volume of freight transported by rail – a figure that has been falling consistently since 1998 – and the drastic cuts imposed on the CEF budget?
2. Does the Commission not feel that the spiralling cost of the Lyon-Turin project are jeopardising funding for other European transport projects financed through the CEF Transport budget – projects that are much more relevant in view of the increases in heavy goods traffic, particularly along north-south routes?