

**Question for written answer E-005498/2020  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Julie Lechanteux (ID)**

**Subject:** Rail transport: putting the concepts of public service in the general interest and the interests of users at the centre of the Commission's action

The UK's rail passenger system, privatised in 1993 by the government of John Major, has been definitively completed by Covid-19. The sector had been fragmented into a multitude of separate owners, operators and service providers who rarely worked for the benefit of users.

Significant parts of the rail network had been handed over to obscure owners of rolling stock leasing companies. Prices had increased inexorably, while punctuality and quality of service deteriorated.

It can be argued, therefore, that the European Union is lagging behind, because while the UK is now considering a structural reform (the Williams Rail Review)<sup>1</sup> going in the opposite direction to the changes introduced in 1993, the Commission is continuing to plough ahead with privatisation and the opening up of the rail transport sector to competition. Since 2001, we have had four rail packages in the space of 15 years aimed at completing the Single European Rail Area.

Given the failure of Britain's neoliberal experience, does the Commission intend to reconsider its policy and focus instead on the concepts of public service in the general interest and the interests of users?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-williams-rail-review>.