

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2655/07
by Joost Lagendijk (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: Abuse of dominant economic position by Netherlands Railways

On 19 March, Rover, the Dutch rail users' association, submitted a complaint to the Netherlands Competition Authority. Netherlands Railways (NS) intends to do away with the Benelux train via Roosendaal at the end of December. It will then be replaced with a high-speed rail service using the HSL-Zuid (southern high-speed) line. Unlike on the Benelux train, it will be necessary to reserve tickets in advance for the new service. Fares will be higher and the high-speed service from Amsterdam to Brussels will operate on a different line to the Benelux train.

The NS is both the operator of the existing Benelux service and a majority shareholder (90%) in the High Speed Alliance, the business which will operate the new high-speed line. It is very unlikely that any other business will operate the Benelux service, because this can only be done viably if it is integrated with domestic rail services. However, that would not be possible, because NS still has the exclusive concession for the Amsterdam-Roosendaal service until 2014.

Does the Commission agree that, in closing down the Benelux service, NS is abusing its dominant economic position?

- If not, why not?

- If so, will the Commission take action to prevent it?