



*The Voice
of European
Railways*



Mr. José Manuel BARROSO
President
European Commission
BERL 13/062
BE-1049 Brussels

Brussels, 24 February 2009

Dear Mr. President,

The European rail community, while supporting the idea of an EU economic recovery plan in response to the global crisis, would like to express its concern over the projects proposed by the Commission, to be realised through the €5bn allocated from the EU budget.

Despite the recommendation of the Council in December to focus on “infrastructure”, the proposals submitted by the Commission only concern energy and broadband, without addressing the key area of transport infrastructure. This preference has generated a lot of astonishment in the rail community: it is very difficult to understand the criteria leading to a decision to concentrate investments on two sectors that have always been able to finance their investments out of their own revenues. In contrast, transport infrastructure depends almost entirely on public sector financing, and is therefore severely hit by the current crisis. In the case of rail, this comes on top of a prolonged historical lack of investments by Member States.

Transport infrastructure, in particular for rail, can be a powerful lever to boost growth and jobs in the short term, and therefore help to overcome the economic slowdown and to improve the conditions for an economic recovery. As you can see from the list of projects attached, there are a number of rail projects agreed at a European level through the framework of TEN-T policy that are ready to be built. The money could be spent immediately, but the lack of financial support delays their implementation.

Furthermore, investment in rail infrastructure is urgently needed if the EU is to achieve its sustainability goals. Transport alone is responsible for 27% of the EU's CO2 emissions, and over 70% of this is generated by road transport. Unlike other sectors, transport emissions continue growing and are proving a serious obstacle to meeting the EU's target of a 20% cut in greenhouse gases by 2020. Modal shift from road to rail can reduce this impact but, for this to happen, major investment in rail infrastructure is necessary.

The EU recovery plan, coordinated with the national rescue plans that you will be discussing on 1 March, could be an opportunity to transform this crisis into an opportunity to reshape the EU transport system and make it more sustainable in the longer term.

In view of the importance of this issue and in the absence of understandable criteria for the selection of the investment projects in the proposal for the EU recovery programme, we would like to ask you for a meeting in order to discuss with you how this programme could be designed in a way to meet the challenge of the economic crisis in the best possible way.

In view of the European Summit on 19-20 March, a similar letter has been addressed to the President of the European Council and Prime Minister of Czech Republic Mr. Topolánek.

Yours sincerely,



Mauro MORETTI
Chairman



Hans-Jörg GRUNDMANN
Chairman



Johannes LUDEWIG
Executive Director



Michael CLAUSECKER
Director-General