



Public web-conference:

Putting cross-border rail traffic on the right track

The European Year of Rail in European border regions

Date: Wednesday, 24 February 2021, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. (Central European Time)

Online-conference organized by the left group in the European parliament THE LEFT and the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Brussels in cooperation with the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Prague

Languages: Czech, English, German and Polish

Rail travel is environmentally friendly, safe and comfortable. One of the plans of the **European Green Deal** is to shift freight transport from road to rail and inland waterways in order to reduce greenhouse gases.

The European Commission announced that 2021 will be the “European Year of Rail”.

The EU has set itself a difficult task. The **rail infrastructure in Europe has been neglected for decades**, lines have been closed down and there is also a lot of catching up to do in cross-border European freight transport, “[it] is currently hampered by physical, legal and regulatory obstacles such as incompatible infrastructure” the Commission states.

The Polish-Czech-German border region is a good example for the challenges and obstacles. Trucks are congesting the highways, but rail freight traffic in the border regions lies idle, because lines on the German side are not electrified. The current state of affairs is also a failure

of the privatization doctrine, which has placed maximizing returns above the demands of society as a whole on the rail network. **The transport sector is the only sector where the greenhouse gas emissions have increased** in recent years, so the shift to rail transport is an important aspect towards the needed social-ecological transition. However, European funding can be help to improve cross border rail infrastructure.

The construction of new rail infrastructure, as well as the electrification and the expansion of existing lines **can create local employment – jobs that are desperately needed** in the current social and economic crisis, and jobs that are necessary for the realization of an ambitious Green New Deal that the European Left wants to see. We **need a progressive industrial policy at European and national level to expand rail infrastructure** across the European Union.

Climate change is forcing us to make more efficient use of resources instead of basing our decisions on profit alone and from this point of view, rail transport is the way back to the future. Will 2021, the European Year of Rail create the momentum to improve the situation in border regions or will it remain window dressing?

We have invited representatives of the European Commission, the German trade union EVG, the Polish and Czech civil society and members of parliament from Czech Republic and Germany.

During the event we would like to discuss the following questions:

- How are border regions affected by road transport and what are the advantages and benefits of rail transport?
- What are the obstacles and how to expand the rail infrastructure?
- Which stakeholders can contribute to this effort?
- What kind of political initiatives do we need?

Programme:

Welcome: Cornelia Ernst, Member of European Parliament, Committee for Industry, Research and Energy

Host: Joanna Gwiazdecka, Director Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Prague

Panel 1 Europe on the sidings

- **Mr. Marco Boehme**, member of regional parliament Saxony (DIE LINKE), Germany (10 min) **(confirmed)**
- **Ms. Iwona Budych**, KolejDEPL, Initiative for German-Polish passenger rail transport, Poland **(confirmed)**
- Representative civil society Czech Republic (10 min) (to be confirmed)
- **Ms. Caren Lay**, member of national parliament (DIE LINKE Germany) (10 min) **(confirmed)**

Discussion with participants (15 min)

Panel 2 Light at the end of the tunnel?

Host: Cornelia Ernst (MEP)

- **Mr. Keir Fitch**, Head of Unit “Railway Safety and Interoperability”, DG MOVE European Commission (10 min) (confirmed)
- **Ms. Kateřina Konečná**, Member of European parliament (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy), Committee on transport and tourism, Czech Republic (10 min) (confirmed)
- **Ms. Jolanta Skalska**, German trade union EVG transport and mobility, Germany (10 min) (confirmed)

Discussion with participants (15 min)

Conclusion (5 minutes)

To register, please send an e-mail to: manuela.kropp@rosalux.org

We will then send the Zoom-link to you.

Please feel free to share this invitation with interested peers and contact persons.

For more information please contact: Cornelia Ernst (Member of European Parliament) cornelia.ernst@ep.europa.eu or Manuela Kropp manuela.kropp@rosalux.org

We are looking forward to an interesting discussion with you!