

Strengthening passengers rail is essential for the decarbonisation of transport in Spain

A greater use of the existing network, an improvement of national and cross-border infrastructures and an adapted taxation are fundamental pillars to boost the train as the main means of transport for passengers in Spain and Europe

10 February 2021.- The [eco-union](#) association and [ECODES](#) foundation, as Spanish partners of the [Europe on Rail](#) initiative, published today the report "Present and Future of Passenger Rail Transport in Spain" (available in Spanish only) with the aim of promoting policies and measures to strengthen national and international rail transport in Spain in the framework of the [European Year of Rail](#).

This report shows how the launch of new **direct cross-border connections** between major European and Spanish cities, with day and night trains, the implementation of a fair **environmental taxation** that integrates the benefits of rail, and an increase in investment in **rail infrastructure** can contribute to exponentially reduce CO2 emissions in Spain and Europe. Moreover, these measures would turn the rail transport system into the preferred option for citizens when planning their journeys.

Rail is essential to reach the environmental and climate objectives by 2030 and 2050, which are needed to respond to the climate emergency through the process of transformation and transition of transport and mobility. Because of its sustainability, high capacity and operability, rail transport is the main lever to achieve the **decarbonisation of Spain**, while contributing to the **cohesion of the national territory** and to an increase its **competitiveness and connectivity** with Europe.

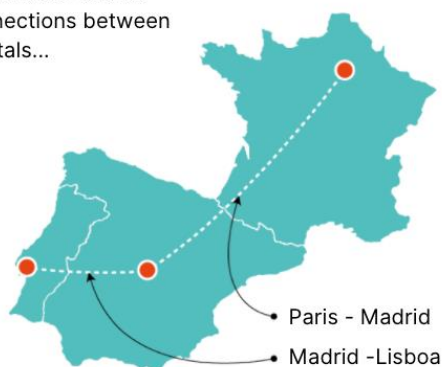
Jérémie Fosse, director of **eco-union** and one of the co-authors of the report, stresses that *"if we really want to achieve the climate objectives, we need an attractive, competitive and sustainable rail system that offers a real alternative to the more polluting options such as air travel and private cars"*.

The **European Year of Rail** should be the starting point for both the return of night trains and new direct daytime trains across Europe. So far, there is no integrated European rail network, but only a patchwork of national rail systems. Trains often end at borders, and an international journey requires multiple tickets, in different languages and from different companies, with no guarantee of passenger rights in case of delay or cancellation.

In this sense, **Monica Vidal**, Director of Public Policy and Climate Governance at ECODES and co-author of the report, emphasizes that *"the shame of flying and the need to reduce CO2 emissions have become a powerful ally of cross-border trains with much less climate impact than aeroplanes and road transport. Now is the time to bet on the rail system as it is one of the fundamental pillars that will lead us to decarbonisation"*.

Not only businesses, Civil Society and regions are demanding this boost to rail over other transport systems, but also citizens themselves are increasingly calling for it. For example, a survey¹ conducted in September 2020 highlighted that **two thirds of European citizens support a ban on short-haul flights if the route is covered in a maximum of 12 hours by train**. So far, however, rail connections do not even exist between all European capitals. Focusing on Spain, there is currently **no direct train between Madrid and Lisbon; or Madrid and Paris**.

Neighbours, but without direct cross-border connections between capitals...



In the post-covid framework, the **recovery, transformation and resilience plans** must be the economic backbone to finance projects oriented towards Rail transport. It is now time to take the right decisions to launch a Spanish and European rail renaissance that will provide mutual climate, social and economic benefits.

***Europe on Rail** is an initiative of several non-profit organizations from Poland (Civil Affairs Institute), Germany (GermanWatch), France (France Nature Environnement), Spain (Ecodes & ecounion) and Belgium (Transport & Environment). The network seeks to build support for a rail renaissance in Europe and to boost cross-border passenger rail transport.*

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¹ <https://www.eib.org/en/surveys/2nd-climate-survey/climate-action-and-policy-solutions.htm>