

PRESS RELEASE

EU state-owned rail incumbents are showing that competition - and not collusion - will bring new passengers to rail

BRUSSELS, September 1st 2021: last week, it was reported that Ouigo España – a subsidiary of the French state-owned rail incumbent SNCF – has already achieved 400,000 passengers in the first three months of competing against Spanish incumbent Renfe in the Spanish domestic high speed rail market¹.

Meanwhile, there was excitement a few days ago when a high-speed train of the Italian state rail incumbent FS came to Paris², preparing for the new cross-border competition against SNCF between the neighbouring countries of France & Italy. **This new dynamism in the market will boost modal shift to rail.** SNCF and FS are showing that – when state incumbents compete against each other – it benefits both passengers and the EU Green Deal. ***So what is the rest of Europe waiting for?***

Unfortunately, most state-owned rail incumbents still prefer to collude with each other – despite having all the assets in place in order to compete. For example: a new draft document shows that six of them (ÖBB, MÁV, ČD, ZSSK, PKP and SŽ) plan to “co-operate” on a new exclusive high speed rail pact in Central Europe.

However: not only do such ‘co-operations’ reduce choice for passengers and keep ticket prices high, they are also costly and slow. The numerous “co-operation” personnel at incumbents are an additional bureaucracy. Instead of acting nimbly, they have to agree upon everything with each other first before taking a decision.

Co-operations between state-owned rail incumbents have failed. The evidence is clear: most of them have already been colluding across borders for many years, but the modal share of cross-border long distance rail remains low – just 5%.

ALLRAIL Secretary General Nick Brooks states: *“Operators should not need a partner operator to cross an internal EU border. Instead, every operator should be able to do this and operate within other EU Member States on its own. Any ‘co-operation’ must focus on non-discriminatory interoperability of rolling stock & infrastructure”.*

Consequently, any new or existing cross-border collaborations between market dominant state-owned rail incumbents must be fully subject to EU competition law.

¹ [Good results for the first three months of Ouigo in Spain | RailTech.com](#)

² <https://www.railtech.be/fr/materiel-roulant/2021/08/30/trenitalia-va-exploiter-des-paris-milan/>