

Rail sector urges policy makers to avoid dominance of digital platforms

On 24 April, rail stakeholders and policy makers gathered in the European Parliament to debate the Commission proposal on Multi-Modal Digital Mobility Services (MDMS). Participants at the high-level panel discussion, which was organised by the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and hosted by MEP Maria Grapini, IMCO Committee Vice-chair and TRAN Committee Member, heard that the rail sector is already making significant progress in implementing e-ticketing for rail passenger services and providing dynamic travel information in compliance with existing legislation.

During the debate, involving European Commission representative Charlotte Nørlund-Matthiessen (cabinet of Transport Commissioner Vălean), consumer representative Agustin Reyna (BEUC) and railway operator representative Heike Luiten (NS International), Alberto Mazzola (CER Executive Director), pointed out that MDMS is an important Regulation, however legislators must be careful not to enable dominance of digital platforms. The point was raised among a series of critical elements to be taken into consideration for any new legislation:

- **Sector solutions are the fastest** – Sector-based solutions should be supported and considered as the starting point, when improving multimodal ticketing. The Commission proposal must provide a legal framework where transport operators are not deterred from innovating (meaning they have ownership of proprietary solutions), commercially sensitive insights are protected, and incentives to invest in ways of generating value through the entire transport chain are preserved.
- **Passengers need low prices** – The economics of transport operators and ticket vendors needs to be properly considered to avoid undermining transport economics or substantially increasing passenger ticket prices.
- **Avoid dominance of digital platforms** – Distribution commissions, unless capped at low level, increase the risk that well-funded tech giants (often non-European actors), with limited investments in the distributed services, would enjoy guaranteed profits at the expense of transport service providers, public sector budgets and ultimately consumers.
- **Data reciprocity matters** – The MDMS initiative must ensure that transport companies and authorities have full access at all times to any data on inquiries and usage received by the sales platforms. The mobility market is developing at a highly dynamic pace, thus, railway undertakings need to constantly innovate their products to best serve the customers' needs and expectations.

MEP Maria Grapini said *“As Vice-Chair of the Committee for the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, but also as a member of the TRAN Committee, I wish to emphasize the importance of rail transport for the competitiveness of the Internal Market, but also for transport safety. I congratulate CER for their concern for rail transport, for improving the regulations regarding Multi-Modal Digital Mobility Services. I think there is a need for better communication between the European institutions and the railway sector, a wider consultation before regulating”.*

NS International Director, Heike Luiten said *"As Railway Undertakings, we looked where we could improve international rail for our passengers. We identified concrete actions where we are now collaborating, such as ticketing, real time information and increased booking horizons. This forms the basis of the CER Ticketing roadmap, which NS both helped create and strongly supports"*.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: *"The CER Ticketing Roadmap lays out a series of commitments by CER members that seek to achieve a seamless ticketing experience by 2025. We are committed to it. In the upcoming MDMS proposal, it is crucial to consider that, along with speed, cost is the most significant factor when selecting a mode of transportation for long distance journeys. Given the divergent economic interests of transport operators and ticket vendors, the MDMS proposal must avoid raising passenger fares. CER is firmly committed to playing a constructive role in advancing modal shift, of which ticketing constitutes an important aspect, and eagerly looks forward to engaging with the European institutions on this critical issue."*

See also the CER ticketing Roadmap on the CER website [here](#).

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About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together around 70 railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 78% of the rail network length, 81% of the rail freight business and about 94% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policymakers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on Twitter [@CER_railways](#) or [LinkedIn](#).