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Dear Mr Mercalli,

I would like to thank you for your letter concerning the high-speed rail link between Lyon-Torino and its relevance for the EU climate strategy. President Ursula von der Leyen asked me to reply on her behalf.

The European Commission Communication on the European Green Deal calls for a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport, in order for the EU to become a climate-neutral economy by 2050. The strategy calls also for a substantial part of the 75% of inland freight carried today by road to shift to rail and inland waterways.

Climate change cannot be tackled if we do not have an efficient modal shift from road to more sustainable modes of transport. To achieve this objective we need to make all transport modes more sustainable, we have to promote multimodal transport and we need to invest more in modern and clean solutions in Europe.

Rail is one of the cleanest means to move people and goods. It has the lowest greenhouse gas emissions among all modes of transport. Rail is also one of the safest transport modes and an excellent tool to connect people, regions and businesses across the EU. If we want to achieve climate goal objectives, there is therefore a need to increase rail's share in transporting people and goods. The share of rail today is not satisfactory, as it transports 7, 6% of the passengers and 17, 4% of the freight<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> report on monitoring development of rail market, 2019.

The EU TEN-T policy fits very well in this context. It promotes modal shift, it invests in the most environmentally friendly modes of transport, it supports modern, clean and safe infrastructure and it also pays a particular attention to cross-border investments and missing links in transport chains.

The new rail link between Lyon and Turin is the main cross-border infrastructure project on the Mediterranean Corridor of the TEN-T. It is a truly European project, supported since many years by the governments of France and Italy, as corroborated by a number of bilateral agreements.

Because of its strategic European dimension, the lack of viable alternatives to cross the Alps and its contribution to modal shift, the European Commission co-finances the project from the EU budget.

One of the biggest challenges in the Alpine area is to curb the road traffic by promoting alternative transport systems. The current rail route is not commercially viable and goods continue to use already congested roads between France and Italy. The traffic from heavy goods vehicles concentrates in few border valleys putting additional environmental and traffic burden in this highly sensitive area.

If we fail to find an effective and sustainable solution to cross the Alps, our economies and populations will continue to suffer from the negative and costly consequences of increased congestion, pollution and accidents.

As demonstrated by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Europe needs modern and environmentally friendly cross-border infrastructure.

The Lyon-Turin base tunnel is a project of European solidarity and unity.

Yours faithfully,



Adina VĂLEAN