Special report n° 19/2018: A European high-speed rail network: not a reality but an ineffective patchwork

26/06/2018 Transport and mobility

Since 2000, the EU has been investing €23.7 billion into high speed rail infrastructure. There is no realistic long term EU plan for high speed rail, but an ineffective patchwork of national lines not well linked since the European Commission has no legal tools and no powers to force Member States to build lines as agreed.

Cost-efficiency is at stake, because not everywhere very high speed lines are needed, as the cost per minute of saved travel time is very high, going up to €369 million, and as the average speeds only amount to 45 % of the maximum capacity, while cost overruns and construction delays are the norm rather than the exception.

Sustainability is low, effectiveness of the investments is lacking and EU added value is at risk with three out of seven completed lines having low passenger numbers leading to a high risk of ineffective spending of €2.7 billion EU co-funding. Moreover, nine out of 14 lines and stretches have insufficient high numbers of passengers, and 11 000 national rules still exist, although the Court already asked in 2010 to lift these technical and administrative barriers.

Share on

Access document EN

Related links and documents

Browse the HTML version of this publication

Press release EN

You may also be interested in



09/06/2026

Special report 16/2026: Western Balkans Investment Framework

The Western Balkan countries

20/04/2026

Special report 02/2025: City pollution in the European Union (Easy-to-read version)



04/02/2026

Special report 05/2026: Sustainable commuting around urban areas

Three quarters of the EU's



19/01/2026

Special report 02/2026: EU transport infrastructure

Megaprojects are key to the completion of the EU

Was this page useful? Yes No Report an issue