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The friendship treaty between France and Spain should improve cross-border connections in order to strengthen economic and cultural relations through sustainable, safe and clean mobility.

For decades, Spain and France have enjoyed a close relationship based on growing and fruitful cultural, social and economic exchanges. However, today, the vast majority of the movement of people and goods between the two countries is carried out by polluting modes of transport based on fossil fuels, such as cars, trucks and planes.

Indeed, in recent years, several cross-border links previously provided by rail, a reliable, clean and safe means of transport, have been abandoned, despite the need to decarbonise mobility in order to meet the climate targets set out in the Paris Agreement and the European Union's Green Deal.

Just a few months ago, the cooperation between the Spanish state-owned railway operator Renfe and the French SNCF, which jointly operated cross-border passenger services between France and Spain via Catalonia, ended. Since then, only two trains a day in each direction cross the border through the Perthus tunnel, despite a huge investment of more than €1 billion to link Figueres and Perpignan by a high-speed line.

The only remaining services on this Mediterranean corridor are the Paris-Barcelona link, now operated by the SNCF with only two services per day in each direction, while more than 18 daily flights are offered by airlines between the two main European tourist destinations. The direct Barcelona-Toulouse and Barcelona-Marseille routes have been closed, despite the geographical, cultural and economic proximity between Catalonia, Occitania and the southern region.

Night trains between Paris and Barcelona were also suspended in 2013, when the high-speed line was inaugurated, thus eliminating the only sustainable alternative to air transport. On the Atlantic corridor, the Paris-Madrid night service has also been discontinued and there are currently no direct trains between these neighbouring capitals.

The rail service offer between France and Spain is totally insufficient to provide a low-carbon, comfortable and competitive alternative to short and medium-haul flights or private cars, which dominate cross-border mobility, causing dramatic environmental damages and social exclusion.

French and Spanish civil society organisations call on the national governments and rail operators of both countries to extend existing lines, to re-establish the Barcelona-Toulouse/Marseille services, to reopen the Paris-Barcelona and Paris-Madrid night trains and to increase the number of trains.

The development of cross-border rail connections is essential to give citizens the choice of a more sustainable mobility between the two countries and to contribute to the fight against climate change. Investing in the modernisation of the network and modern rail facilities also creates green jobs, promotes responsible tourism and supports competitive industrial development.

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Signatories



Europe on Rail is a European initiative led by civil society organisations to reduce carbon emissions from international mobility. Through research, advocacy and partnerships with other mobility and transport stakeholders, it aims to promote ambitious policies for a revival of rail in Europe. www.europeonrail.eu



The Iberian Railway Alliance was created to influence the railway policy of Spain and Portugal, with the aim of making the railways play a central role in the mobility of both countries. To achieve this, the Alliance proposes concrete operational solutions in the short term, and strategic planning in the medium and long term. <https://alianzaferrocarril.org/>



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eco-union is a think & do tank based in Barcelona that aims to promote the climate transition towards sustainability in Europe and the Mediterranean region. We work with governments, businesses and international institutions to develop and implement better policies and accelerate the energy transition, sustainable mobility, green and blue economy, among other sustainable development issues. www.ecounion.eu



The “National Federation of Transport Users’ Associations” (FNAUT) advises and defends the users of all modes of transport and represents them before the public authorities and transport companies. As a general interest pressure group, it strives to influence transport and land use policy. FNAUT Occitanie Pyrénées Méditerranée represents the voice of users throughout the region to local authorities, transport operators and through its local associations. <https://www.fnaut.fr>



Promoció del Transport Públic (PTP) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation and the only association dedicated exclusively to the defence of collective public transport in Spain. For more than 25 years we have been studying and defending collective public transport, as well as rail transport of goods, thinking only in the common interest, under the principles of social equity and environmental protection. <https://transportpublic.org/es/>