

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **EUROPE: must tackle the impact of COVID-19 on passenger rail services:**

**These are extraordinary times without a precedent. The coronavirus pandemic represents a global challenge that individual countries cannot manage on their own.**

The members of ALLRAIL, the Alliance of Passenger Rail New Entrants in Europe, are in close contact with health & government authorities and follow the recommended measures – so that passengers have a pleasant and safe journey. The health of both passengers and staff is our highest priority. Every COVID-19 victim is a tragedy.

At the same time, it is undeniable that the passenger rail sector has been hit hard by the crisis. There has been both a sharp drop in demand and a reduction in the number of rail services, for example after travel bans have been implemented.

We must not lose sight from the fact that, while the pandemic will pass, it will have a lasting economic impact on a sector that is absolutely crucial if Europe is to meet its climate change goals in line with the EU Green Deal.

Therefore, ALLRAIL welcomes yesterday's statement by the EU Commission Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager for a temporary state aid framework to support the economy<sup>1</sup>. However, we call on her to **prioritise applications according to levels of pollution -> the lower the carbon footprint, the higher the priority.**


ALLRAIL Secretary General Nick Brooks states: "we should not forget that - despite the airline industry's well publicised call for bailouts - passenger rail is one of the most sustainable modes of transport and as such offers the opportunity to form the backbone of Europe's journey towards meeting its climate goals."

Furthermore: it has been new entrant, privately owned passenger rail companies that have really driven modal shift to rail in recent years - boosting transparency, improving quality, creating new jobs and rapidly increasing demand within a short time<sup>2</sup>.

At this moment in time, ensuring the survival of all passenger rail companies is essential not only for the preservation of millions of jobs, but also towards the attainment of a climate neutral future and integrity of the single transport market.

Brooks continues: "This tragic crisis should be the catalyst towards rebalancing the economy away from less sustainable transport modes. Is it sensible to bailout short haul flights where passenger rail is also a viable option?"

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement\\_20\\_479](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_20_479)

<sup>2</sup> For example see <https://www.railwaygazette.com/in-depth/italy-transformation-at-italo-ntv/54818.article>