



Brussels, 24.4.2018
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COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 24.4.2018

**on the Évora-Mérida cross-border rail connection along the Atlantic Core Network
Corridor**

(The only authentic languages are Spanish and Portuguese)

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, repealing Decision No 661/2010/EU, and in particular Article 47(2) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) As acknowledged by the 2nd Work Plan for the Atlantic Core Network Corridor, approved by the Member States concerned, the cross-border section Évora-Mérida is expected to play a crucial role in ensuring the functioning of the corridor with interoperable and efficient connections towards and from South-Portugal. The port of Sines will be more efficiently connected to the freight axis Sines-Elvas-Madrid-Paris and the cross-border section will address an important missing link in the high speed rail connection between Lisboa and Madrid.
- (2) In the current state of projects completed or agreed for financing on the Évora-Mérida cross-border section, there is still a 17 km stretch which is not covered and needs to be built with a joint deployment of European Rail Traffic Management System. This stretch is composed of approximately 7 km between Elvas/Caia to the border on the Portuguese side and 10 km between Badajoz and the border on the Spanish side.
- (3) The Évora-Mérida cross-border section requires carrying out a complex set of projects for which sufficient coordination is an important challenge. In order to support its coordinated and timely implementation, it is necessary to adopt provisions laying down a description of the necessary actions and the timetable for their implementation. This will help achieve the cross-border objectives of the 2nd Work Plan for the Atlantic Core Network Corridor. According to that work plan, the Évora-Mérida connection shall be operational at the earliest possible date and, in any case, by 2030 at the latest.
- (4) The cross-border dimension of the project also requires the optimisation of the use of dedicated governance structures, which are already in place. The European Coordinator for the Atlantic Core Network Corridor and a representative of the Commission should participate in these structures as observers.
- (5) In order to monitor progress of the implementation, the Member States concerned, namely Spain and Portugal, should provide the Commission with regular reports

concerning the sections situated in their respective territories, and notify any delays encountered.

- (6) The European Economic Interest Group Alta Velocidad(e) España Portugal (AVEP EEIG) was constituted on 26 January 2001 and its corporate purpose, since the last amendment of its statutes, includes performing any task within the scope of the Spain-Portugal railway connections which is entrusted to it by the Spanish or Portuguese Government or by their respective infrastructure manager companies Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias (ADIF) or Infraestruturas de Portugal SA (IP S.A.).
- (7) The remaining budget needed for the full implementation of the Évora-Mérida connection is estimated to be at least EUR 500 million. The projects implemented or planned so far are worth close to EUR 390 million. It is important to identify the remaining actions so that the related availability of Union, national and regional funding as well as private financing can be fully optimised.
- (8) The Governments of Spain and of Portugal set up on 22 June 2015 the Spanish-Portuguese Working Group of the Atlantic corridor, with the objective to establish a joint planning for developing the infrastructure of the corridor in an interoperable way, in accordance with each country's plans and with the corridor's work plan.
- (9) In the Declaration of Intentions about cross-border transport infrastructure signed by Spain and Portugal on 30 May 2017, both parties recognised the need to ensure technical compatibility and to coordinate timings of execution of the investments. They committed to doing their best to ensure the timely completion of a number of projects listed in the Declaration, some of which are relevant to the Évora-Mérida cross-border connection.
- (10) The Sines-Setubal-Lisbon-Elvas-Caia-Madrid connection is part of the Strategic Plan for Transport and Infrastructure (PETI3+) Horizon 2014-2020 of the Portuguese Ministry of Economy.
- (11) The High Speed Line Madrid-Portuguese border is part of the Strategic Plan for Infrastructure, Transport and Housing (PITVI) Horizon 2012-2024 of the Spanish Ministry of Development.
- (12) The measures provided for in this Decision have been approved by the Member States concerned and are in accordance with the opinion of the Committee referred to in Article 52 of Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

Subject matter

This Decision lays down a description of the actions and the implementation timetable for the rail cross-border section Évora-Mérida, as well as the related governance provisions.

Article 2

Actions and timetable

Portugal and Spain shall ensure the timely implementation of the following actions:

- a) by 31 December 2019:
 - (1) completion of the design studies for the Évora-Caia section in Portugal;

- (2) completion of the works of the infrastructure, tracks and control system for the Mérida-Badajoz section in Spain (with polyvalent sleepers).
- b) by 31 December 2020:
completion of the works of the electrification (25 KV) for the Mérida-Badajoz section in Spain
- c) by 31 December 2022:
 - (1) completion of the first phase of the works for the Évora-Caia section in Portugal in accordance with CEF project 2014-PT-TM-0627-M (with polyvalent sleepers);
 - (2) completion of the second phase of the works for the Évora-Caia section in Portugal, in accordance with CEF project 2016-PT-TMC-0059-M, with electrification at European standard voltage (25 kV) and possibility to form 750 m long and 1400 tonne freight trains. The Sines-Elvas/Caia rail connection shall be reduced by 140km in length and up to 3 hours in time for long-distance passenger trains compared to the current route which is not direct, and the maximum possible operating speed shall be of at least 250 km/h.
 - (3) completion of the modernisation of the line Sines-Ermidas-Grândola in Portugal.
- d) by 31 December 2025:
completion of the third phase of the works for the Évora-Caia section in Portugal with deployment of electronic signalling systems (ERTMS).

Article 3

Governance

1. The completion of the actions referred to in Article 3 shall be discussed at least twice per year between the representatives of Portugal and Spain at the meetings of the European Economic Interest Group Alta Velocidad(e) España Portugal (AVEP EEIG) and the Spanish-Portuguese Working Group of the Atlantic corridor. The European Coordinator for the Atlantic Core Network Corridor and a representative of the Commission shall be invited to participate to those meetings as observers.
2. Portugal and Spain shall ensure that all relevant studies and activity reports of the AVEP EEIG and of the Working Group for interoperability in the Iberian Peninsula are immediately sent to the European Coordinator and analysed in the framework of the Atlantic Core Network Corridor Forum.

Article 4

Reporting

Portugal and Spain shall report at least once a year to the Commission and to the European Coordinator for the Atlantic Core Network Corridor on the progress in implementing the actions referred to in Article 3 and shall notify any delay encountered, specifying the causes for the delay and indicating the corrective measures taken.

Article 5

Review

By 31 December 2023 at the latest, the Commission shall, after consultation with Portugal and Spain and with the assistance of the European Coordinator for the Atlantic Core Network Corridor, carry out a review of the actions and of the timetable referred to in Article 3.

Article 6

Addressees

This Decision is addressed to the Portuguese Republic and the Kingdom of Spain.

Done at Brussels, 24.4.2018

For the Commission

Violeta BULC

Member of the Commission