

Charter of Hendaye : Joint Declaration of January 23, 2010

This declaration was worked out by associations and movements of various Member States of the European Union (France, Spain, Italy) which fight against the construction of new HSR lines (High Speed Railway) and great capacity lines dedicated to fast freight, and which have gathered today to join their forces and to make their voices louder and stronger, since the problems that they are facing are the same everywhere. The opposition will therefore surpass the local frame to become European.

We, citizens, associations and movements of various states (Italy, France, Spain) in our fight against the projects of HSR and great capacity lines dedicated to fast freight

Confirm that:

- These projects constitute an ecological, socioeconomic and human disaster for the territories they cross: destruction of natural spaces and agricultural lands, a new barrier of harmful effects and degradation of the environment with important negative impacts for the residents;
- These projects are unable to lead to the participation of the population in decision processes. We denounce the opacity with which the governments and the administrations act before the deep social malaise, and their scorn of the arguments and proposals of the citizens;
- the official justification for the construction of these new lines is constructed systematically resorting to false hypotheses about the traffic and the socioeconomic yield, as well as to an underestimation of the costs of accomplishment in order to "sell" better a project whose real utility has not been demonstrated; on the contrary, numerous studies have proven the non relevance of these projects in economic and social terms (Essig Reports in Britain, Bermejo in Southern Basque Country, Citec in Northern Basque Country, Brossard 1998 and Ponts et Chaussées 2003 in the Rhone-Alps, Cahiers of the Technical Observatory of the Lyon-Turin in Italy - Italian organization), as well as the reports of the French and Italian Courses of Accounts;
- the priority granted to the HSR is done, with a colossal cost, to the detriment of the traffic of proximity and of the priority in the maintenance and development of the existing railway networks, which are neither maintained nor optimized so as to develop a transport of freight that would irrigate the territories and a public service of transport accessible to all;
- The construction of the HSR falls under a perpetual search for great infrastructures (motorways, enlarging of the airports, super-ports...) and is contrary to the concept of sustainable development. We oppose the aberrant expansion of transport provoked by the globalized capitalism, and which does not allow a uniform local development, but on the contrary supports abnormal concentration of the traffics and productions and a wild delocalization.

We demand that:

- the European Commission and the European Parliament as driving force of the transport policies of medium and long distance in the European Union start a reflexion on the nonsense and unnecessary character of these great infrastructures (HSR, motorways, enlarging of the airports, super-ports...) and a major revision of the strategy of the EU as regards European transports (TEN-T, Trans European Networks – Transport);
- the Governments of France, Italy and Spain stop immediately the construction work and projects of HSR to undertake a real uniform public debate on a European scale on the model of transport, territorial planning and organisation of our society that underlie this unrestrained development of HSR lines.

We claim that solutions are to be sought in:

- the regeneration, maintenance and optimization of the existing lines, which is the most acceptable alternative solution from an environmental point of view, and with much lower financial costs than the construction of new lines, and which corresponds to the implementation in France of article 1 of the Grenelle Environmental law of August 3, 2009 (solution also recommended in the "White Book" by Delors);
- the decrease of transports, together with a major transformation of the economic and social model, particularly by giving priority to proximity and to relocalizing the economy;
- the restitution, as a last resort, of the capacity of decision to the most directly affected populations, foundation of an authentic democracy and local autonomy in front of an imposed development model.