

Adina Valean: Over 48 billion euros for railway projects under national recovery and resilience plans

The states of the European Union are committing over 48 billion euros for railway projects through their national recovery and resilience plans, and Romania's metro and railway projects amount to 4.5 billion euros, the European Commissioner for Transport, Adina Valean told on Friday a press conference on the occasion of the arrival in the Bucharest North Station of the "Connecting Europe Express" train.

"I can say that it is a good time for investments and modernizations of the railway infrastructure. From the data we now have on the national recovery and resilience plans, we know that the European Union states are committing over 48 billion euros for railway projects. In Romania's National Plan the metro and railway projects also amount to 4.5 billion euros. Furthermore, through another European funding mechanism, the so-called CEF - Connecting European Facility - Romania could access around 800 million euro for the modernization of the railway network," Adina Valean affirmed.

According to the European official, in order to attract these amounts, the recommendations of the European Commission are for Romania to plan its investments well, to have solid projects, a governance and a management of these investment projects as efficient as possible.

"The money exists. Of course, the European Commission's recommendations are for Romania to plan its investments well, to have solid projects, a governance and a management of these investment projects as efficient as possible. For a better drawing and management of projects in Romania, we organized a high-level working group since February this year, in which experts from the European Commission and transport authorities work together in regular meetings to increase the success rate of European-funded Romanian projects. Yesterday the first meeting in physical format of the European working group with the Romanian group took place," specified Adina Valean.

As regards the "Connecting Europe Express" train, she stated that she intends to promote the train as a means of transport for goods and passengers, but it can also be seen as a laboratory.

"It will show to us through its long European journey what we need to do to have a truly unique European railway space. Ideally we should have had only one train. In reality, due to the lack of interoperability in the European network, between certain European rail networks we have had three different trains - but this is just a backstage detail from a list of shortcomings and obstacles that the European railway faces in order to reach its true potential. But the European railway agenda is ambitious. This agenda is being discussed at a number of conferences that are being held along this train's course in various European cities. In Lisbon, for example, we talked about connecting high-speed trains to European capitals. In Bucharest we are debating the financing of railway infrastructure projects, in Berlin we will present the conclusions of a study on long-distance trains, and in another conference our theme is how we can make rail freight more attractive to companies," Adina Valean went on to say.

At the same time, the European Commissioner emphasized the importance of trains for the European transport system.

"The North Station is part of Romania's history, but also of our personal history, of the Romanians. I am glad that the Connecting Europe Express train stopped in the North Station, a laboratory train, an experimental train that travels for 36 days through all European capitals. The starting point was Lisbon and the end point will be Paris. In each of the nearly 40 stops, citizens, civil society, railway companies and railway specialists have the opportunity to meet and discuss the importance that trains have for the European transport system, because we cannot talk

about a European transport system, about a competitive European economy without putting railway or, in other words, trains at the center of transport policies," she added.

Connecting Europe Express, a special train created for the European Year of Rail 2021, arrived at North Station on Friday. The train left Lisbon station on September 2. It will stop in more than 100 cities and towns in 26 countries during its five-week trip before arriving in Paris on October 7. At the same time, the train will make a notable stop in Ljubljana, connecting the Portuguese, Slovenian and French Presidencies of the EU Council.

In total, the route is 20,000 km long and the train will cross 33 border crossing points.

To mark this event, the Representation of the European Commission in Romania tells the story of the railways through an exhibition in Gara de Nord (North Station). A curator helped to select 10 representative works from Romania, extraordinary visual stories. The pictures are taken by Romanian photographers who have known excellence in the field of photography and have been rewarded over time with numerous awards and medals at national and international festivals and salons under the patronage of the most reputable organizations in the field of photography.