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Answer given by Ms Vălean  
on behalf of the European Commission  
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As regards the installation of the International Union of Railways Gauge (UIC) lines in Portugal, article 39.2.a (i,v) of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) Regulation implies that the new high-speed lines between Lisbon and Madrid, Lisbon and Porto and Aveiro and Salamanca have to be constructed in UIC gauge. This may be achieved through the intermediate step of equipment with polyvalent sleepers and the later shifting to UIC gauge. With the provisions of the current TEN-T Regulation, Portugal is thus not becoming a rail island due to the Iberian gauge and the border crossings with Spain that are part of the core TEN-T network are guaranteeing the interconnection with the rest of the European rail network. The gradual transition from the Iberian gauge to the UIC gauge needs strong coordination between the two countries and the approach followed in Portugal is designed to maintain interoperability with Spain. Moreover, in order for these rail connections to be fully interoperable, they have to be electrified and the European Railway Traffic Management System is to be installed. If these lines are used as mixed lines for passengers and freight, further parameters, such as axle load and train length, are to be implemented.