COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) 2023/856

of 18 April 2023

on the request for registration, pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of the European citizens' initiative entitled 'Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network'

(notified under document C(2023) 2617)

(Only the Dutch text is authentic)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

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

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the European citizens' initiative ([1]), and in particular Article 6(2) and (3) thereof,

Whereas:

(1) A request for registration of a European citizens' initiative entitled 'Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network' was submitted to the Commission on 10 March 2023.

(2) The objectives of the initiative are expressed by the organisers as follows: 'to connect all European capitals through high-speed railway lines. We are calling for the European Commission to make a proposal for a legally binding act to establish a European high-speed train network as quickly as possible. This means linking up the existing high-speed railway networks and building high-speed lines where these do not yet exist.'

(3) An annex to the initiative provides further details on the subject matter, objectives and background of the initiative. It explains that while all Europeans have the right to move freely within the borders of the EU, they should also be able to do so regardless of their age, financial means and physical state or mental capacity. The organisers claim that while the high-speed railway network in Europe is over 11 500 km long, it mainly connects cities in a limited number of Member States and that many Member States are not part of the European high-speed railway network. The organisers consider that a European high-speed railway network should be established because: (i) train travel is sustainable and safe; (ii) high-speed trains offer a comfortable alternative to medium-haul flights; (iii) high-speed trains are inclusive and accessible to all; (iv) high-speed connections contribute to regional development and evenly distributed economic growth in the EU; (v) high-speed railway lines lead to greater cohesion and benefit the entire population. The organisers purport that to enable safe and sustainable connections between people in Europe, it is important to link up the various networks of the individual Member States and to expand the overall network in view of the increasing number of passengers.

(4) As regards the objectives of the initiative, the Commission has the power under Articles 170 to 172 of the Treaty to present a proposal for a legal act that contributes to the establishment and development of trans-European networks in the area of transport and to promote the interconnection and interoperability of national networks. On the basis of Article 171(2) of the Treaty, Member States must, in liaison with the Commission, coordinate among themselves the policies pursued at national level which may have a significant impact on the achievement of these objectives. The Commission may, in close cooperation with the Member State, take any useful initiative to promote such coordination. Moreover, the second paragraph of Article 172 of the Treaty provides that guidelines and projects of common interest which relate to the territory of a Member State require the approval of the Member State concerned.

(5) The Commission considers that none of the parts of the initiative manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act of the Union for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

([1]) OJ L 130, 17.5.2019, p. 55.

(6) That conclusion is without prejudice to the assessment of whether the concrete substantive conditions required for the Commission to act, including compliance with the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity and compatibility with fundamental rights, would be met in this case.

(7) The group of organisers has provided appropriate evidence that it fulfils the requirements laid down in Article 5(1) and (2) of Regulation (EU) 2019/788 and has designated the contact persons in accordance with Article 5(3), first subparagraph, of that Regulation.

(8) The initiative is not manifestly abusive, frivolous or vexatious, nor is it manifestly contrary to the values of the Union as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union or to the rights enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

(9) The initiative entitled 'Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network' should therefore be registered.

(10) The conclusion that the conditions for registration under Article 6(3) of Regulation (EU) 2019/788 are fulfilled does not imply that the Commission in any way confirms the factual correctness of the content of the initiative, which is the sole responsibility of the group of organisers of the initiative. The content of the initiative only expresses the views of the group of organisers, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Commission,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The European citizens' initiative entitled 'Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network' shall be registered.

Article 2

This Decision is addressed to the group of organisers of the citizens' initiative entitled 'Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network', represented by Ms Afryea UITERLOO and Mr Rogier VERGOUWEN acting as contact persons.

Done at Strasbourg, 18 April 2023.

For the Commission
Věra JOUROVÁ
Vice-President