



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 17 December 2013

Transport: Parliament committee paves the way for a single European rail area

The European Commission welcomes the adoption today by the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee (TRAN) of the reports on the six legislative proposals forming the "[Fourth Railway Package](#)".

Commission Vice-President Siim Kallas, responsible for mobility and transport, said: "The vote today is a milestone in view of the completion of the Single European Rail Area, made possible by the determination of committee members. This vote creates momentum for further progress in the Council under the Greek Presidency. Our final aim is to deliver better quality and more choice for more competitive rail services in Europe."

Rail is a vital part of the EU transport system, with a key role in addressing rising traffic demand, congestion, fuel security and decarbonisation. But in many Member States rail is currently facing stagnation or decline. This is why the Commission proposed in January 2013 far reaching measures to encourage more innovation in EU railways by opening EU domestic passenger markets to competition, as well as substantial accompanying technical and structural reforms ([IP/13/65](#)).

On the so-called "technical pillar" of the package (safety and interoperability directives and regulation concerning the European Railway Agency), the committee confirmed the need to develop common European rules and to remove existing administrative and technical barriers. This is done notably by strengthening the role of the European Railway Agency (ERA), which would become a "one-stop shop" issuing EU-wide vehicle authorisations for placing on the market, as well as granting EU-wide safety certificates for operators. This will contribute to avoiding discrimination, to increasing economies of scale and to decreasing administrative costs and procedures for railway undertakings active across the EU. Currently, rail authorisations and safety certificates are issued by each Member State individually.

On the so-called "market pillar" of the package (directives on governance and market opening, regulation on public service obligations and repeal of Regulation 1192/69), the committee took a more cautious approach.

The Commission welcomes that the TRAN Committee

- endorsed the objectives of introducing competition on domestic commercial passenger services by 2019;
- maintains guarantees for an effective independence of the infrastructure manager in the exercise of all of its functions, while introducing greater flexibility for Member States — notably by reinforcing the role of national rail regulators;
- confirmed clear rules to ensure financial transparency within vertically integrated structures, which are essential to ensure an equal and non-discriminatory access to the network;

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- confirmed that competitive tendering for public service contracts in rail should be a leading principle.

However, the Commission would have preferred a more limited possibility to award rail contracts directly — but will continue to work with co-legislators in order to achieve a more balanced approach.

Next steps

The European Parliament is expected to vote in plenary on the package in February 2014, while the Council will continue work on the ERA regulation and the proposals on market opening and governance during the Greek presidency.

More information

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