Single European railway area: use of railway infrastructure capacity

2023/0271(COD) - 19/05/2026 - Text adopted by Parliament, 2nd reading

The European Parliament adopted a legislative resolution **approving** the Council's position at first reading with a view to the adoption of a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area, amending Directive 2012/34/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) No 913/2010.

Objective

The proposed regulation introduces new rules relating to the allocation of railway infrastructure capacity, allowing for longer-term planning of railway services, and thus aims for better use of the infrastructure and an increase in railway services, both for passengers and for goods.

The new system relies on a comprehensive consultation process to enable infrastructure managers to better understand the needs of the various applicants. Once the consultation phase is complete, capacity will be allocated. The new system also aims to: (i) enable better cross-border coordination and the implementation of improved multi-network services; and (ii) limit excessive modifications through a system of deterrent penalties.

Role of Member States

Member States may provide strategic guidance to infrastructure managers, while respecting their operational autonomy. In particular, they may: (i) decide on the specific nature of a timetable model, (ii) set minimum volumes for specific types of rail transport services, and (iii) take national priorities into account in capacity allocation parameters or conflict resolution.

Capacity management

The management of railway infrastructure capacity will be based on longer-term planning. Each timetable that will come into effect from December 2030 onwards and will apply to the following year will be developed and implemented in three successive phases:

1) Planning: Infrastructure managers will begin with strategic capacity planning and ensure that these plans are coordinated. Based on the strategic plan, the infrastructure manager will define: (i) a capacity strategy, (ii) the capacity model, and (iii) a capacity supply plan. Special procedures are designed to manage heavily used or saturated infrastructure.

2) Allocation: Infrastructure usage rights must be allocated among applicants using digital tools and services. Infrastructure managers must: (i) consider issues related to the capacity of service facilities; and (ii) integrate infrastructure work into planning. If, at the end of the allocation process, conflicts remain between applicants' requests and available capacity, a conflict resolution process is planned. If no agreement can be reached, a fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory method will be applied based on operational, socioeconomic, and environmental criteria.

3) Adaptation: Before the schedule comes into effect, modifications may be requested. To avoid excessive changes, requests must remain limited, and a penalty system is in place to discourage excessive modifications.

Traffic and crisis management

The European Network of Infrastructure Managers (ENIM) will develop a framework to help infrastructure managers and operational stakeholders coordinate the management of traffic, disruptions and crises, using common tools, methods and procedural approaches.

Performance review

The ENIM will monitor and compare the performance of rail infrastructure services. It will publish a European performance review report and update it annually. The Commission may establish a performance advisory panel, acting as an independent and impartial expert group tasked with making recommendations.

Governance

The regulation assigns new responsibilities to the ENIM: to implement the three phases and to better coordinate the work of infrastructure managers regarding multi-network rail services. The ENIM will also appoint the network coordinator, subject to approval by the European Commission. The European Network of Rail Regulatory Bodies (ENRRB) will oversee regulatory matters and coordinate between national regulators.

Implementation

The first timetable applying the new rules provided for by the regulation will be published in 2030 and will begin to apply from 14 December 2030.