

Transport of dangerous goods by railway

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The rapporteur, Mr Cornelissen (EPP, NL), emphasised that strict measures were needed to control the transport of dangerous goods by rail, particularly in urban areas. While expressing agreement with the common position of the Council, he went on to stress that some room for manoeuvre also had to be left open to Member States as far as local transport was concerned. Similarly, in the event of an accident he wanted to see the authorities kept fully informed of the nature of the goods being transported. Finally, he called on the Commissioner to clarify the definition 'tunnels with characteristics similar to the Channel Tunnel'. Recalling that the proposal in question was aimed at removing barriers to freedom of movement between Member States, Commissioner Kinnock recognised that harmonisation could not be achieved overnight. It was for this reason that the Commission had provided for maximum flexibility in the proposal and the Council, in turn, had added to this. The Commissioner was not at all in favour of the abundance of bureaucracy associated with Amendment No 1 since this was of no benefit whatsoever from a safety point of view, in that highly dangerous goods such as radioactive substances were already subject to notification. He also considered that Amendment No 2 was completely superfluous, given that its content was already part of the common position. The Commissioner then recognised that the political compromise on the Channel Tunnel that had been reached within the Council comprised the application of stricter standards that were justified from a safety point of view by reason of the specific characteristics of the Channel Tunnel and the Oresund Tunnel. Mr Kinnock concluded by pointing out that in his view the common position seemed to be a balanced compromise.