Development of the Community's railways

1995/0205(COD) - 24/10/1996

The rapporteur, Mr Farthofer (PSE, A), pointed out that the Committee on Transport had supported the ongoing deregulation of the Community railway network by adopting the report amending the Directive in question. According to Mr Farthofer, the committee had adopted several amendments on measures to write off the debts of existing railway companies and harmonise the rules applying to all modes of transport, failing which the enterprises in question would be threatened with bankruptcy. The rapporteur also proposed that cross-border passenger rail transport should not be put at a disadvantage compared to rival modes of transport when it came to VAT. Commissioner Papoutsis stated that the Commission was looking into a number of problems, including reducing debt levels, the inclusion of external costs, tax relief and fees for infrastructure use. However, he said that he was unable to take over a number of the Committee on Transport’s amendments, including Amendments Nos 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8, which went beyond the scope of the proposal for a directive. He also thought that the first paragraph of Amendment No 7 would constitute a step backwards in the debt reduction process.