

Development of Community's railways (amend. Directive 91/440/EEC). Railway package

1998/0265(COD) - 22/11/2000

The Conciliation Committee reached agreement on the joint text of the directive, as part of the whole 'railway package'. The main discussion revolved around opening the rail sector to competition, which the Council had wanted to limit to the Trans-European Rail Freight Network (TERFN). The compromise reached in conciliation provided that access rights should be granted for a transitional period of up to 7 years (rather than 5 years as initially proposed by Parliament) to licensed railway undertakings for the international transport of goods on that defined network, but that after this transitional period (and by 2008 at the latest), all railway undertakings should be granted rights of access to the entire rail networks of all Member States for international freight transport. The two delegations also managed to agree on more technical matters, such as the deletion of the "Austrian clause" concerning the complete separation of infrastructure management and transport services and other national derogations for some Member States. The outcome of conciliation was regarded as a major breakthrough and a success for Parliament, as the result was a fair compromise. Other sectors, such as national freight transport and national and international passenger transport by rail, might now also be gradually liberalised at a later stage. Commissioner Loyola de Palacio announced that she would come forward with a new package of railway measures in the first half of 2001.