European railway area: European Railway Agency for interoperability and safety. 2nd package

2002/0024(COD) - 26/11/2003 - Commission opinion on Parliament's position at 2nd reading

The European Parliament wishes to defend the Commission's initial proposal designed to ensure balanced representation of the Council and the Commission as well as of the various interested parties on the Agency's administrative board. With a view to improving the transparency and openness of the Agency's activities, Parliament wants representatives of workers' organisations from the industry to participate in the Agency's working parties on subjects directly related to the working conditions, health and safety of staff. It also wants wider consultation of the social partners on the proposals made by the Agency. Parliament also includes the standard financial and budgetary provisions resulting from the entry into force of the new Financial Regulation on 1 January 2003, which it had not been possible to take into account during the work on the common position1. It also incorporates the standard provisions on transparency. The Commission supports all these amendments. On the other hand, the Commission cannot support a certain amendment as it presents legal difficulties in respect of the division of responsibilities between the Agency and the various national authorities. Nor can the Commission accept an amendment which would introduce rigidity and bureaucracy in relations between the Agency, the national safety authorities and the enquiry bodies, while the Regulation already provides that one of the Agency's tasks is to facilitate networking and cooperation between these bodies. Other amendments concern driver qualifications. It is not possible to incorporate these amendments, as the Commission is preparing a specific proposal on this subject for the end of the year. Finally, the Commission is unable to include the amendment concerning the Agency's working languages, since it believes that the Agency should simply use the working languages that are already current among professionals in the industry.