Transport by rail, road and inland waterway: aid for the coordination

2000/0023(COD) - 20/03/2001

The committee adopted the report by Félipe CAMISÓN ASENSIO (EPP-ED, E) broadly approving the proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading). However, it adopted a large number of amendments designed to tighten up some of the provisions of the regulation. In particular, the committee wanted to eliminate the disparity in the funding of infrastructure according to the legal nature of the company involved and so prevent the railways (which were operated by undertakings in all Member States) being disadvantaged compared to road transport and inland waterways (which were generally managed directly by the state). It accordingly proposed that state aid to network operators should be generally exempt from the ban on subsidies, bearing in mind the public interest character of transport infrastructure. The regulation should also recognise the need for state aid to compensate the infrastructure manager for any obligation to apply charging systems which did not allow coverage of the total costs of transport infrastructure (this might arise if the principle of marginal cost were implemented in future EU legislation). The committee also felt that the proposed compensation scheme for the use of infrastructure based on uncovered external costs of other modes did not provide a sufficiently strong incentive to reach a modal split compatible with sustainable mobility and therefore wanted other aid schemes to be introduced as well, such as support for transport operations in modes having a low level of external costs. Such a scheme would be intended as a form of "freight service contract". The committee also wanted the definition of "transhipment" in the regulation to include connections between land and maritime transport. Lastly, it felt that the 12-month exemption period for aid measures proposed by the Commission was too short, and called for it to be extended to 24 months.