

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

1998/0265(COD) - 17/02/1999

The Committee has given the green light for the gradual liberalisation of the railways in the Union, beginning with international freight transport. By adopting two reports by Pavlos SARLIS (EPP, Gr.), the Committee underlined the need for a revitalisation of the railways in the EU. It was generally felt that there is an increasingly pronounced mismatch between the organisation of rail transport services and rapidly changing patterns of demand. With a view to increasing their share of the freight and passenger transport market, it is necessary to extend free-market rules to the railways. The international freight sector should be followed later by the domestic freight transport and the international passenger transport sectors. A large majority in the committee deplored the fact that the Commission had omitted to make proposals for the gradual extension of railway liberalisation, as the EP had recommended in its Resolution of 13 January 1998. Reporting on the Commission's proposal to amend Directive 91/440 on the development of the Community's railways, Pavlos SARLIS called on the Commission to submit proposals in order to give railway undertakings the right of free access to railway infrastructure and to facilitate the simultaneous elaboration and implementation of accompanying measures. The committee adopted a key amendment granting Community railway undertakings access to and transit rights through the railway infrastructure of all member states, however solely for the transport of goods. This right had so far been granted only to so-called international groupings of railway undertakings. The rapporteur also proposed a new provision under which member states are obliged to complete the legal separation between railway undertakings and management of railway infrastructure within two years of the date of entry into force of the directive.