

Rail transport: interoperability of the trans-European conventional rail system

1999/0252(COD) - 25/11/1999 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to propose a programme for the integration of conventional railway systems, including a directive on the interoperability of the trans-European conventional rail network. **CONTENT :** this communication responds to requests from the Council and the Parliament for proposals on the integration of conventional rail systems to accompany the creation of access rights for the provision of international freight services. It is an important element of the Commission's strategy to improve the operating efficiency and customer service quality of the Community's railways through a wide ranging process of market liberalisation, improving conditions of utilisation of infrastructure (charging and capacity allocation), interoperability and technical harmonisation. The proposals in this communication and the draft directives already before the Council (the infrastructure package) are an initial step in fulfilling the Treaty obligation of a single market in rail transport services. As the market develops, the Commission intends to combine this legislative approach with TENs policy on relieving infrastructure bottlenecks, strict application of Community competition law and rules on public procurement as regards railway equipment and support for research and development. The three main objectives of this communication are: 1) to improve the organisation of international services, especially of freight in order to increase the competitiveness of international freight services. In addition, railway undertakings and infrastructure managers should adopt the immediate aim of reducing delays at border crossings to the time needed to change locomotives as well as trying to eliminate stops at borders entirely; 2) to promote the interoperability of the conventional rail networks through further harmonisation of technical and operating rules, so as to raise the performance of international services; 3) to help create a single market for railway equipment. Despite restructuring of the sector in the 1990s, the bigger national markets remain largely closed. Railways are locked into buying from national suppliers, which raises procurement costs and so adds to the price of rail transport. In addition, the Commission is convinced that the Community must tackle the technical, regulatory and operational differences that divide the conventional railway systems. This should be done by extending the process created for the high-speed system to conventional rail, with the changes necessary to fit specific characteristics. It therefore presents with this communication a proposal for directive on the interoperability of conventional rail. The directive would apply to the conventional trans-European network and would cover the renewal equipment as well as upgrading and construction. Furthermore, the Commission proposes giving immediate priority to harmonisation in these fields : signalling and command/control systems; data exchange, information technology and telecommunications, especially for freight transport; rolling stock used for international services; emissions of noise, particularly from freight wagons; qualifications of train crews for cross-border operations; assessment conformity with specifications; mutual recognition of maintenance and repairs. Moreover, in 2000, the Commission will launch preparatory technical work on emissions of railway noise, through a working group as well as a study of the qualifications specifically required for cross-border operations by train crews and the certification of competence, in consultation with the social partners. In 2001, the Commission will propose mandates to the joint representative body for: - the preparation of specifications for signalling and command/control systems for conventional rail, based on ERTMS; - the preparation of specifications for the interoperability of passenger carriages and freight wagons; - assessment of what specifications for multiple units and locomotives may be needed; - assessment of whether Community guidelines for testing railway equipment under operational conditions are required; - the preparation of specifications for procedures at border crossings, the interconnection of railway IT systems, and for their interface with other modes; - the preparation of the specification and procedures required for mutual recognition of maintenances and repairs. In 2002, the Commission will also propose mandates to joint representative body for an assessment of whether harmonisation of catenary and pantograph design would be justified and an assessment on whether further harmonisation of infrastructure would be justified. In conclusion, every two years the Commission shall report to the

European Parliament and the Council on the progress made towards achieving interoperability of the trans-European conventional rail system. To this end, the joint representative body shall develop and regularly update a tool capable of providing, at the request of a Member State or the Commission, a chart of the trans-European conventional rail system showing for each component of the system (lines and hubs, rolling stock series), the principle characteristics (e.g. basic parameters) and their compliance with the characteristics laid down by the TSIs (Technical Specifications for Interoperability).