

Railway transport: international rail passengers' rights and obligations. 3rd package

2004/0049(COD) - 25/09/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, 3rd reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the joint text approved by the Conciliation Committee for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on rail passengers' rights and obligations. It approved the joint text.

The key points of the agreement reached on the scope of the Regulation (Article 2) can be summarised as follows:

- the Regulation will apply to all rail journeys and services provided by licensed railway undertakings;
- when the Regulation enters into force in late 2009, all rail passengers will enjoy a set of basic rights (covering, for example, companies' liability for passengers and their luggage, and the right to transport of people with reduced mobility);
- Member States may exempt long-distance domestic rail services from the other provisions of the Regulation for an initial period of five years, which may subsequently be extended for two further periods of up to five years;
- with the exception of the basic rights which will apply universally, Member States may grant urban, suburban and regional services an indefinite exemption;
- the Commission is required to take appropriate action if an exemption granted by Member States is deemed to be not in accordance with the provisions of Article 2.

Other important elements of the overall agreement are:

- if Member States grant exemptions from the Regulation, they should encourage railway undertakings, in consultation with organisations representing passengers, to put in place arrangements for compensation and assistance in the event of major disruption of a rail service;
- railway undertakings must inform passengers of their rights and obligations under the Regulation. They may make use of a summary of its provisions to be drawn up by the Commission in all official languages;
- companies must put in place non-discriminatory access rules for the transport of disabled people and persons with reduced mobility. At unmanned stations, railway undertakings must make every reasonable effort to give disabled people and persons with reduced mobility access to travel by rail;
- carriage of baby carriages and wheelchairs is covered by the provisions of the Regulation dealing with disabled people and persons with reduced mobility, and by COTIF. A new Article in the Regulation provides that railway undertakings must enable passengers to bring bicycles on to a train, if appropriate for a fee, provided they are easy to handle, that the rolling stock permits this, and that the railway service is not adversely affected;
- railway companies must define service quality standards and publish an annual report on how far they have met these. These reports must be put on the website of the railway company concerned, and will also be made available through the website of the European Railway Agency.