

Freight transport in Europe

2008/2008(INI) - 18/10/2007 - Document attached to the procedure

The aim of this communication is to promote the creation of a strong European rail network which will offer a better quality of service in freight transport than today in terms of journey times, reliability and capacity. Improving service throughout this network should have a positive impact on all segments of the freight market, including that of the single wagonload. This objective ties in with the Commission's initiatives to improve the quality of freight transport in Europe.

Several options have been studied for creating **the European rail network giving priority to freight**:

- **Option 1** - allowing the players in the sector and the Member States to act without any new Community input;
- **Option 2** - embarking on a series of new measures to create a freight-oriented network made up of sections dedicated to freight and others receiving mixed passenger and freight traffic;
- **Option 3** - launching a specific programme leading to a European freight-dedicated network.

Option 3 seems to be the most likely to meet the Commission's objective. There is, however, a risk that it will become too large, too costly and too much of a long-term prospect. Looking at the results of the actions already undertaken, it appears that the first option, the Community status quo, is inadequate.

Option 2, which would comprise initiatives designed in particular to underline the coordination between the infrastructure managers of different Member States, and to encourage and establish a framework for the creation of corridors, seems to offer a balanced response to the objectives set, for the medium term. It will have to complement the initiatives already under way with legislative, financial and political schemes. The financial commitment required is also less than that for creating a dedicated network. Nevertheless, the need to identify possible sources of financing has not been underestimated. In the longer term, this work could lead to the formation of a rail network that is partially or even entirely dedicated to freight.

The proposed measures are as follows:

Creation of a freight-oriented corridor: the Commission: (i) will propose a legal definition of a freight-oriented corridor structure, in particular setting down the main rules applying to this type of corridor; (ii) will encourage Member States and infrastructure managers to create transnational freight-oriented corridors. Each Member State will have to be participating in at least one corridor structure by 2012; (iii) will examine the possible sources of finance for corridor structure activities within existing programmes.

Measure on service quality along a corridor: the Commission: (i) will, after an impact assessment, propose a legislative measure on the publication of quality indicators; (ii) will continue to promote all measures designed to improve the transparency of information on the quality of rail freight service; (iii) will publish a report, before 2008, on steps taken by rail freight operators to improve their quality of service.

Infrastructure capacity of a corridor: the Commission: (i) will ask the corridor structures to draw up a programme of investments aimed at eliminating bottlenecks and harmonising and improving infrastructure capacity especially in terms of train length and gauge; (ii) will study the advisability of extending the Community legal framework to include the technical characteristics with which freight-oriented corridors will have to comply; (iii) will examine the possible sources of finance for these investments within existing programmes.

Allocation of train paths: the Commission: (i) will propose additional legislation on the international allocation of train paths and on the priority accorded to international freight; (ii) will propose enabling authorised applicants to request train paths throughout the freight-oriented network; (iii) will encourage infrastructure managers to offer additional efficient international train paths and to intensify the work already started in the framework of *RailNetEurope*; (iv) will specify the powers of the regulatory authorities in regard to international traffic and encourage the development of cooperation between them.

Priority rules applying in the case of traffic disturbance: the Commission: (i) will propose tightening up the existing legislation relating to the priority of international freight in the event of disturbance of the network; (ii) will ask the corridor structures and infrastructure managers concerned to harmonise the priority rules throughout the infrastructure under their charge.

Ancillary rail services (especially terminals and marshalling yards): the Commission: (i) will encourage the corridor structures and infrastructure managers to set up, together with the players concerned, an efficient and appropriate network of terminals and marshalling yards; (ii) will look into the possibility of additions to the existing legislation to improve the transparency and ease of access to ancillary rail services.

All of these measures will be examined in the framework of structured deliberations in the form of a strategic group, for example with representatives of the Member States, rail infrastructure managers and users. This group will have in its remit in particular to define and identify the characteristics of the corridors, to determine what legislative and operational measures are required and to determine the powers and responsibilities of the corridor structures. It will have to have completed its work in the first half of 2008.