

Measures for a sustainable rail market in view of the COVID-19 pandemic

2020/0127(COD) - 19/06/2020 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to assist the railway sector deal with the emergency created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a significant drop in demand which in turn has led to a sharp drop in rail transport. Demand for both passenger and freight services for the whole of 2020 is expected to be well below 2019 levels.

The pandemic may lead to a large number of insolvencies and liquidity shortages within the railway sector. It affects all the supply chain and has effects on railway undertakings, shippers and logistic enterprises. Infrastructure managers and service facility operators will also suffer from its financial consequences.

The rail sector makes a vital contribution to the European economy as a whole and to employment, directly employing more than 1 million people, of whom around 600 000 are employed in railway undertakings and 440 000 in infrastructure managers (by the end of 2016). Rail transport is also a key element of the EU's strategy to improve the sustainability of the transport sector, ensure economic and social cohesion and connecting Europeans within and between Member States.

[Directive 2012/34/EU](#) establishing a Single European Railway Area does not allow Member States, in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic, to respond to the unpredictable effects on rail transport by adapting, in particular, the rules on charging and capacity allocation. Targeted derogations should therefore be allowed in order to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on rail transport and to preserve the integrity of the single European railway area.

CONTENT: the proposal for a Regulation is intended to complete the existing rail-related framework in order to allow national authorities and rail stakeholders to deal more easily with a number of negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to respond to the urgent needs of the railway sector as long as those consequences persist.

These temporary emergency measures concern notably the waiver, reduction or deferral of track access charges for the use of rail infrastructure, as well as the waiver of reservation charges.

They cover a reference period from 1 March 2020 until 31 December 2020, in respect of which charges may be altered, by derogation from Article 27 of Directive 2012/34/EU whereby the network statement (displaying all applicable charges) shall be published no less than for months in advance for the deadline for requests for infrastructure capacity.

Income losses on the part of infrastructure managers as a result of the reductions envisaged in the proposed Regulation shall be reimbursed by Member States by 31 December of the year following the year in which the loss was incurred at the latest.

The Commission may, by means of delegated acts, extend the time period during which the measures envisaged by the proposed Regulation apply.