

Railway transport: licensing of undertakings

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the report by Mr Georg Jarzembowski. Mr Jarzembowski had stated that the proposal had more to do with the carriage of goods than the transport of passengers. The Directive put in place a new set of circumstances in which transport systems could be used by trains regardless of the rail operating company concerned. Several rail operators could therefore use the same railway lines. This proposal extended and amended the provisions applying the general principles of the above-mentioned Directive and established the broad outline of a Community system of licences by laying down standards and procedures. These practical applications would, however, be left to the discretion of the Member States. The rapporteur welcomed the increased flexibility which this gave to Community rail services. Rail transport had a major role to play in solving the EU's transport problems, but could only do this by constantly adapting to changing circumstances. A greater choice of services and operators appeared to be the most direct way of achieving a flexible railway system. The establishment of the single market was an important step along this route. The rapporteur stressed that all the operators should come to an agreement on appropriate safety standards and that their financial viability should be guaranteed. Strict standards should be laid down for operating equipment, manpower skills and quality of management, and it was necessary to ensure that these standards were enforced. A large majority of Committee members rejected these amendments and called for even stricter safety standards.