



Independent rail regulators are key to competitive rail services

Committees: Committee on Transport and Tourism

To encourage new rail operators to enter the market and offer more and better rail services, Parliament's Transport Committee voted to strengthen EU legislation on liberalised rail services. Every EU Member State should set up a truly independent regulator to stop discriminatory practices and market distortion in rail services, according to the legislative proposal adopted on Tuesday.

Financial transparency, clear and non-discriminatory rules on track charging and allocation as well as open access for all operators to rail-related services (such as common ticketing services, maintenance and repair facilities, fuelling stations, etc.) should be closely supervised by national regulatory bodies. They must become completely independent from the rail industry and from governments, says the transport committee.

"Everybody wants competition and no discrimination, but we have to make sure that all of this is done in a fair way", said rapporteur Debora Serracchiani (S&D, IT). "In the future, I hope we will have a single European regulator, in a single liberalised rail market", she added.

The rapporteur's initial draft, which included complete separation of transport operators and infrastructure managers as "the only way to achieve a single market" was not supported by a majority of MEPs. Nevertheless, the committee is demanding separate and transparent profit and loss accounts and is asking the Commission to present, by the end of 2012, a proposal on complete separation and on the opening of the domestic rail passenger market.

The amended legislative proposal for a directive "establishing a single European railway area" was adopted by 36 votes to six, with one abstention. A majority of MEPs followed Ms Serracchiani's recommendation not to include any provision introducing an obligatory "minimum service" in order not to touch upon rail worker's rights.

The recommendation for first reading should be discussed and voted in plenary in November.

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