

Coronavirus: Transport support package

On 29 April 2020, the European Commission adopted four legislative proposals to provide relief to the transport sector. The objective of these proposals, which taken together cover all modes – aviation, rail, maritime, inland navigation and road – is to ease and resolve some of the practical issues transport operators are confronted with due to the coronavirus crisis. The urgent procedure has been requested for all four proposals, and Parliament is expected to vote during the May plenary session on whether to apply the urgent procedure and move directly to voting its position on the proposals.

One of the first and most visible impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak was on transport. Travel restrictions and containment measures have led to drastic and unprecedented reductions in traffic in all transport modes, all of which have already been seriously affected economically. In addition, some formalities required under EU law such as those regarding the validity of certain certificates, licences and other authorisations, are extremely difficult to comply with in the present context. This is why the [Commission](#) adopted a package of measures consisting of four legislative proposals, the purpose of which is to provide relief to the transport sector. The proposed measures seek to ease and resolve some of the practical issues transport operators are confronted with, by finding concrete ways to facilitate their daily operations and temporarily removing administrative burdens so that they can function more easily during the pandemic. A short description of each proposal is provided below.

European Commission proposals

The package presented on 29 April comprises several legislative proposals.

Due to the coronavirus crisis, EU transport operators and other persons concerned have in many cases been unable to complete formalities or procedures to comply with certain provisions of EU law on the renewal, extension or continued validity of certificates, licences and authorisations. For the same reason, the competent authorities of Member States have sometimes been unable to deal with the requests of transport operators before the expiry of the applicable deadlines. All this called for urgent action at EU level.

The Commission has therefore adopted a [proposal](#) for a regulation laying down specific and temporary measures in view of the Covid-19 outbreak, concerning the **validity** of certain certificates, licences and authorisations, and the **postponement** of certain periodic checks and training in specific areas of transport legislation. The proposal applies to road, rail and inland waterways transport as well as maritime security. It concerns, for instance, driving licences, tachographs, roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles and their trailers, operating licences, rail single safety certificates or authorisations, and inland navigation boatmasters' certificates. The Commission proposes to extend the validity of those certificates, licences or authorisations that would expire between 1 March 2020 and 31 August 2020 (in most cases by six months). The Commission also encourages the use of alternative control means, for instance to check on the activity of drivers that have not been able to renew their expired, lost, stolen, malfunctioning or damaged tachograph; and adjustments concerning the conduct of maritime security inspections and surveys.

In the area of **air transport**, the Commission adopted a [proposal](#) for a regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008 on common rules for the operation of air services in the EU in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. The proposal intends to modify temporarily some existing provisions of aviation-related laws so that the Commission and national authorities can more easily address, for the duration of the crisis, some of the consequences of the coronavirus crisis and mitigate the impacts on aviation. The temporary measures include an amendment to the air carrier licensing rules in case of financial problems caused by the pandemic; a simplification of the procedures applying to the imposition of traffic rights restrictions; more efficient award procedures for ground-handling contracts; and authorisation to prolong ground-handling contracts until 31 December 2021 in order to avoid airports from becoming blocked should ground-handling companies go bankrupt.

In the area of **maritime transport**, the Commission adopted a [proposal](#) for a regulation amending [Regulation \(EU\) 2017/352](#), to enable managing bodies or competent authorities to provide flexibility in respect of the levying of port infrastructure charges in the context of the Covid-19 outbreak. According to the existing provisions, EU Member States have to ensure that a charge for using port infrastructure is collected from port users. While fee differentiation based on categories of users is possible, the regulation does not provide for any easing mechanism for emergency situations. The legislative proposal intends to allow – but not oblige – port authorities to temporarily adapt the collection of port infrastructure charges from all port users. Charges could be waived (not required at all), suspended for a certain period of time, reduced or deferred (the payment would be required later). Furthermore, while port users normally have to be informed of any changes in port infrastructure charges at least two months before these come into effect, under the current circumstances, this information could be provided at shorter notice. As long as it is done in a transparent, objective and non-discriminatory way, it is up to the port authority. These temporary provisions would apply to port charges due between 1 March and 31 December 2020 and should help to provide shipping companies, including ferry operators, with necessary liquidity.

Last, on **rail transport**, the Commission adopted a [proposal](#) amending [Directive \(EU\) 2016/797](#) on interoperability of the rail system within the EU and [Directive \(EU\) 2016/798](#) on rail safety, as regards the extension of their transposition period. The Commission is suggesting to prolong the transposition deadline of the two directives by three months – until 16 September 2020 – for those countries which have not yet transposed the rules. This extension would give the countries concerned enough time to complete the legislative works, and in the interim provide legal certainty to the industry and authorities as to the legislation that applies in the area of rail safety and interoperability. Together with the regulation on the EU Agency for Railways ((EU) 2016/796), the two directives form the 'technical pillar' of the fourth railway package, adopted in 2016, which streamlines the vehicle authorisation and safety certification procedures for European railway operators and manufacturers.

Next steps

Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) discussed the four proposals in a meeting on 11 May 2020. Following the urgent procedure under [Rule 163](#) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, they will be referred directly to plenary, without a report or nomination of a rapporteur. Parliament is thus due to vote at the May plenary session on whether to apply the urgent procedure to each of these proposals. If it does so, the plenary would subsequently vote on any amendments tabled and then on the proposals themselves, thereby enabling the relief package to become operational on the ground quickly.

On [8 May](#), the Member States' ambassadors in [Coreper](#) approved a mandate for the Council Presidency to negotiate with the European Parliament. They decided on a few amendments such as some changes to the Commission proposal on the extension of the validity of certain certificates and licences in order to allow the differences between Member States as regards the spread of the pandemic to be taken into account. Regarding the rail proposal, Council would extend the transposition deadline to 31 December 2020, while for the ports proposal, the Council considers that the temporary legislation should be in force for a shorter period, i.e. only until 31 October 2020. Both the Council and the European Parliament will need to agree on the final texts of the four proposals, which are each to be adopted under the ordinary legislative procedure.

First reading without committee report (Rule 163): [2020/0068\(COD\)](#); [2020/0069\(COD\)](#); [2020/0067\(COD\)](#); [2020/0071\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: TRAN.

For further information see EPRS [Briefing on mobility, transport and coronavirus](#).

