

Thursday, 17 September 2020

COVID-19 relief measures to rail freight are welcome

The European Parliament's plenary session voted the Regulation on establishing measures for a sustainable rail market in view of the COVID-19 pandemic¹ into European law today. The Council is taking its decision urgently in parallel. The new rules will take effect the day after publication in the EU's Official Journal.

The Regulation will allow Member States to:

- Waive track access charges and mark-ups applicable to freight trains;
- Waive reservation fees that apply to cancelled freight train paths; while

The European Commission is authorized to:

- Extend the 1 March – 31 December 2020 validity of the Regulation in case the pandemic would continue disrupting the rail freight market.

From the perspective of the road-rail Combined Transport sector, it is essential that the benefits to be channeled to freight railway undertakings are shared with the Combined Transport Operators, who take the commercial risk for the intermodal trains. The Combined Transport sector has suffered a 15%-volume contraction during the April-June period, while the number of trains on the network was much higher. In many cases, Combined Transport Operators have made huge efforts to maintain the network and the frequency of trains. As a consequence, a substantial financial hit has been taken by the Operators due to lower-than-usual load factors of the intermodal freight trains.

Attention must now turn towards the Member States, who received a release from the European Union rules preventing them to charge zero for the use of the railway infrastructure. Rail freight stakeholders should form an alliance in every Member State to jointly request that the government in charge of the infrastructure actually makes use of the solution created in the Regulation adopted today. Combined Transport Operators are ready to join this communication effort.

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¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0260&from=EN>



Ralf-Charley Schultze

"UIRR members look forward to railway undertakings sharing the benefits of the track access charge, the mark-up and the reservation fee waivers with their Combined Transport Operator customers, who equally suffered due to the pandemic-related volume reductions." - stated UIRR President Ralf-Charley Schultze.

Who is UIRR?

Founded in 1970, the **International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport (UIRR)** represents the interests of European road-rail Combined Transport Operators and Transhipment Terminal Managers.

Road-Rail Combined Transport (CT) is a system of freight forwarding which is based on efficiently and economically inserting electric rail into long-distance (road) transport-chains through the use of intermodal loading units (ILU).