



Questions and Answers: New measures to better manage and coordinate European rail traffic

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What measures is the Commission proposing and why?

Passenger and freight trains function differently. They travel at different speeds and have different braking distances, for example. For both to share the same tracks safely, operations must be carefully planned and coordinated.

This complex task is assigned to rail infrastructure managers. The services themselves are provided by railway undertakings.

Infrastructure managers must find a way to make the best possible use of the rail network, satisfying to the extent possible all railway undertakings' requests, while finding time for maintenance and development work on the infrastructure. This infrastructure capacity and traffic management involves exchanges with the railway undertakings and results in a timetable of rail services.

Capacity and traffic management are regulated to make sure that there is no discrimination against railway undertakings in their access to the network. The Commission is now proposing to replace the existing EU framework (Directive 2012/34/EU) with a more flexible and effective one. This will allow infrastructure managers to respond better to the needs of different rail customers: **stable timetables and the option of early ticket-booking for passengers, and flexible train runs adapted to just-in-time supply chains for freight shippers.**

The new regulation will create space for additional services, improve the performance of rail and reduce some of the costs for infrastructure managers and railway undertakings.

The regulation will also introduce better coordination mechanisms at EU level to facilitate the provision of cross-border rail transport. It will replace Regulation 913/2010, which set special rules for capacity allocation for cross-border rail freight, ensuring that the infrastructure capacity needs of rail freight are fully integrated and better taken into account within the whole network's capacity management.

The proposal will enable better coordination between stakeholders involved in the rail leg of multimodal freight transport chains. It will also make it easier to respond to network disruptions and crises affecting rail transport services, and address performance issues, increasing reliability and punctuality.

The proposal builds on work carried out by the rail sector, in particular the Timetable Redesign Project, to address the weaknesses of current processes for rail infrastructure capacity and traffic management.

How exactly will this initiative increase rail capacity?

The initiative will increase the availability of infrastructure through better planning and allocation processes, and improved cross-border coordination. The proposed regulation builds upon the rail sector's work on new processes and tools to plan and manage rail infrastructure capacity. It introduces a comprehensive capacity-planning phase, which allows all relevant stakeholders to signal their capacity needs and helps infrastructure managers identify capacity deficiencies and inconsistencies in the planning for cross-border trains at an early stage. This process allows infrastructure managers to act proactively and optimise the use of capacity by earmarking capacity for different rail market segments, different train profiles and different flexible allocation methods, instead of relying on a purely demand-driven approach.

Grouping trains with similar profiles together will allow more trains to run on the network within a given period of time.

Earlier detection of capacity bottlenecks will allow more time to put in place countermeasures and

more effective on-time solutions. This will, in turn, make it possible to offer more rail transport services for passengers and freight and reduce traffic disruptions.

What will change and what is new?

The regulation will allow railway undertakings to request and receive infrastructure capacity at any time, based on market needs, instead of having to file requests within rigid timelines. It will also allow railway undertakings to place and receive replies to their capacity requests in a single place thanks to improved interoperable IT tools.

Today, capacity is mostly allocated during the annual timetable-setting process. For additional individual train runs serving transport needs at short notice, capacity can be allocated following ad hoc requests only if left-over capacity is available. The new rules will allow for the planning of regular train runs going beyond the period covered by an annual working timetable through 'rolling planning'. This new approach also allows infrastructure managers to set aside some capacity for later allocation. This will benefit rail market segments that cannot plan their services early, which is the case for many freight services. It will make it possible for freight services to find capacity once their transport needs are clear. It will also help launch new regular rail transport services more quickly, as rolling planning provides more certainty about available capacity.

The Regulation will also discourage misuse of the allocation process. This includes companies reserving capacity 'just in case' and cancelling it later, as well as poor management of capacity by infrastructure managers, for example closing rail lines for works on the infrastructure at short notice.

Discouraging misuse will reduce the number of changes in scheduled services made by infrastructure managers or requested by railway undertakings. This will lower costs. The Regulation provides for clear processes and improved cross-border coordination. It also addresses the risk of discrimination and anti-competitive behaviour by strengthening requirements for regulatory supervision.

How will this benefit railway undertakings and other stakeholders?

The regulation will make it **easier to request and receive capacity**, which will allow for better rail service planning and performance. This will enable earlier ticket sales for passenger trains, better performance by rail freight and more opportunities to set up new rail services.

Railway undertakings and infrastructure managers will benefit from **reduced effort and costs for placing and then changing capacity requests**, which is often the case today due to the predominantly annual way of planning and allocating capacity.

The early integration of **maintenance works**, within capacity planning, together with disincentives for changing allocated capacity, will ensure less disruption of rail services and better rail performance to the benefit all rail stakeholders and rail customers.

The increased **flexibility in capacity allocation** will be especially beneficial for the rail market segments that have difficulty planning their services a year in advance. This is particularly relevant for rail freight, as railway undertakings usually depend on fluctuating demand for their services.

What will this do for passengers, how will they benefit?

Passengers will benefit from additional rail services as the capacity of the network will be better used. Also, new competitors will find it easier to enter the market. Cross-border connections, including night trains, stand to benefit the most. They will be able to offer more attractive travel times, frequencies and onward connections for European travellers than is the case today. In addition, passengers will be able to buy tickets more in advance of their journey than today as greater stability within network capacity will allow rail service operators to open ticket sales earlier than is currently the case.

Is the Commission proposing to abolish rail freight corridors and why? Who will help develop international rail freight and how is your proposal different from what preceded the Rail Freight Corridors Regulation?

The Commission invested considerable effort in making the rail freight corridors concept work. However, the evaluation of the Rail Freight Corridors Regulation ([Regulation \(EU\) No 913/2010](#)) clearly showed unsatisfactory results. These can be explained by incomplete implementation and

design flaws.

In brief, managing capacity on a corridor provides only a partial service. Most rail freight trains do not start and end their journey on corridor lines and use the lines of more than one corridor. The one-stop shop had a number of limitations in supporting applicants and did not succeed in facilitating capacity allocation for a large number of rail freight trains.

The increased focus on cross-border passenger services compounds this problem: passenger and freight flows do not always coincide, so trying to support both via a corridor-based approach is not practical.

Therefore, the Regulation strengthens cooperation within the European network of infrastructure managers. It will abolish the corridor concept for capacity management, but it will ensure that the positive elements of the Rail Freight Corridors Regulation are kept and developed. The Regulation introduces strong consultation and coordination mechanisms for cross-border traffic and strengthens regulatory supervision, including by increasing cooperation at EU level between rail regulatory bodies.

The Commission's 2021 proposal to revise the TEN-T Regulation also integrated the Rail Freight Corridors with the former Core Network Corridors to form Nine 'European Transport Corridors' that represent the main arteries of EU transport.

What is the relationship between the new Regulation and the Timetable Redesign Project?

Timetable Redesign Project (TTR) is an impressive, industry-driven project that has run for almost a decade. The project shows that the rail sector is willing and able to tackle challenges at European level. Therefore, it was a major inspiration for the proposal; the idea is to create a legal framework that allows for its full implementation.

However, moving from a capacity allocation model dominated by demand to one that involves more planning requires the introduction of strong coordination, supervision and regulatory mechanisms, which cannot be developed by the rail sector on its own. Therefore, the proposal builds upon the solutions envisaged in TTR, while complementing additional elements that are necessary.

For More Information

[Press Release](#)

[Factsheet](#)

[Proposal](#)

Evaluation of the Rail Freight Corridors Regulation [<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1624555156110&uri=CELEX%3A52021SC0134>]

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