

COVID-19: Council adopts relief measures for aviation and railways



The Council today adopted a temporary **amendment to the rules on air services** to support airlines and airports in the face of a sharp drop in air traffic due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Council also adopted an extension to the transposition deadline for the rail safety and interoperability directives of the **fourth railway package** to give the rail industry and the authorities flexibility and legal certainty in the current circumstances. Both legal acts are part of the transport emergency package presented by the Commission on 29 April 2020.

The pandemic is having an unprecedented impact on the aviation sector, with the liquidity crisis risking insolvencies and threatening millions of jobs within months if left unaddressed. The measures adopted today will help avoid unnecessary administrative burdens for member states and mitigate the impacts on the sector during the crisis. The extension of the transposition deadline will give the rail sector and authorities leeway to face these difficult circumstances.

Oleg Butković, Croatian Minister for the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure, President of the Council

The regulation on **aviation** amends the **air carrier licencing** rules in the event of financial problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in order to avoid unnecessary administrative burdens. It also introduces a derogation to the procedures used by member states to impose **traffic rights restrictions** to deal with emergencies resulting from unforeseeable and unavoidable circumstances. The derogation will clarify that a member state may temporarily keep a justified and proportionate emergency measure in place for a period longer than 14 days, but the measure may only remain in force for as long as there are public health risks clearly linked to the coronavirus pandemic. The Commission may suspend this action at the request of any member state involved or on its own initiative.

In addition, new temporary rules on **ground-handling services** will help airports to continue operating in the event of a ground-handling company going bankrupt, by introducing a direct procedure for the selection of service providers. They will also help airports avoid complex tenders by allowing for the extension of contracts up to 2022.

The transposition deadline for the rail safety and interoperability directives of the **fourth railway package** will be extended from the current date of 16 June 2020 to 31 October 2020. This will give the rail sector and the authorities more legal certainty and flexibility for addressing the

extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

The Council's vote on the aviation regulation and the rail directive was taken using a written procedure, which was concluded today. The European Parliament voted on 15 May 2020.

The legislative acts will enter into force the day after they are published in the EU Official Journal; the publication date is scheduled for 27 May 2020.

The other two proposals in the transport emergency package – on the validity of licences and on port services – were adopted by the Council on 20 May 2020.