

(English version)

Question for written answer E-004640/25
to the Commission
Markus Ferber (PPE)
(20 November 2025)

Subject: Authorisation of cross-border rolling stock

International rail transport in Europe is on the rise. The Commission has recently presented a high-speed rail plan to accelerate the uptake of new connections between European cities.

However, obstacles for cross-border rail services remain. Rail operators struggle with overcomplicated, slow and costly authorisation procedures for cross-border rolling stock. With the Fourth Railway Package, the EU intended to establish the European Railway Agency (ERA) as a one-stop shop for the authorisation procedure for cross-border rolling stock. Practices from new connections, such as Munich — Milan/Rome, and the lengthy authorisation process for the use of the Frecciarossa 1000 in Germany and Austria, show that difficulties remain and that the powers of the national railway authorities prevail. National authorisations lead to high compliance costs for railway operators and long waiting times for new cross-border trains, effectively holding back the expansion of international rail connections.

In the light of this situation:

1. How does the Commission intend to speed up the availability of cross-border rolling stock?
2. Will the Commission use the upcoming review of the ERA Regulation to establish a truly harmonised European authorisation process for rolling stock?
3. Is the Commission actively facilitating fast authorisation procedures through ERA in its 10 EU pilot services?

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Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas on behalf of the European Commission
(13 February 2026)

The fourth railway package established authorisation processes and shared responsibilities between the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) and national safety authorities.

Trackside signalling and infrastructure authorisations are the responsibility of national safety authorities, while vehicle authorisations require their input to account for national rules.

While authorisations managed by the Agency are subject to strict delays, processes for testing in laboratories or on the infrastructure and certification of compliance, are costly and lengthy processes subjected to national rules and to availability of compliance assessors.

1. The Commission continues to reduce regulatory fragmentation adopting harmonised European rules recently also for compliance test methods, the technical specifications for interoperability (TSI). Alignment allows trains to run across the Union but is delayed by incompatible technology, including national divergences to the European Rail Traffic Management System. The Commission attempts to issue single sets of EU specifications in TSIs that allow ERA to authorise certain vehicles without national input.
2. The authorisation system for rail vehicles is established by the rail interoperability and safety directives ⁽¹⁾. Without revising these directives, the Commission will endeavour to optimise harmonised European authorisation processes during the upcoming review of the ERA Regulation.
3. The Commission and ERA support the authorisation procedures for vehicles involved in the EU pilot services. The Agency has built a dedicated pre-engagement process.

⁽¹⁾ Directive (EU) 2016/797 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the interoperability of the rail system within the European Union, OJ L 138, 26.5.2016, pp. 44-101; Directive (EU) 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on railway safety, OJ L 138, 26.5.2016, pp. 102-149.