

DECLARATION BY COMMISSIONER BURKE ON THE SITUATION  
OF THE RAILWAYS IN THE COMMUNITY

The Council has dealt with one draft regulation and two reports of the Commission concerning the railways. I would like to take this opportunity to repeat again that the Commission considers that finding the solutions to the 'railways' problems on the basis of the Council Decision of 20 May 1975 is a priority task of the common transport policy. The urgent need to tackle the problems of the railways was re-emphasised by the trade union demonstration at Brussels only last month.

It might appear that the measures adopted today are of a technical nature given the extent of the present problems. I, however, believe that the steps taken today will undoubtedly have beneficial effects on the process of improvement presently under way at Community level.

The regulation on laying down uniform costing principles used by railway undertakings, which follows closely upon last years adoption of the regulation on railway accounts, will provide the necessary basis for better commercial co-operation in the field of international train load traffic. In the light of experience thus gained, the Commission intends, together with the Advisory Committee of Experts, to direct its efforts towards a wider application of these principles.

Current action to promote co-operation among the railways of the Nine, particularly in the commercial field, and here I stress combined transport, will continue to be an area of legitimate Community interest both from the point of view of improving the competitiveness of the railways in international transport markets and also establishing a first base for the longer term objectives of promoting the integration of railway activities at the European level.

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Further, on the basis of the same 1975 Council Decision the Commission has recently submitted proposals to the Council amending the Regulations on Public Service Obligations and Aids to Transport, in order to enhance the legal rights of railway undertakings to compensation for obligations imposed upon them by the Member States and to ensure a greater transparency of their annual accounts.

However, of all the measures and action provided for in the Decision of 20 May 1975, the single most important, in my view, for resolving the railways problems is the requirement for Member States and railway undertakings in close collaboration with each other, to agree and implement multi-annual business plans and financial and investment programmes aiming at the financial equilibrium of each undertaking. To date only two Member States have fulfilled this requirement and I must therefore, once again, insist on the urgency and necessity for Member States to fulfill their commitments under the Decision and communicate their plans as soon as possible.