

Channel Tunnel rail traffic at the end of the transition period: Coreper agrees mandate to ensure it can continue



Today, the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee agreed on a **negotiating mandate for discussions with the European Parliament** on a proposal aimed at **ensuring that rail traffic can continue in the Channel Tunnel as of 1 January 2021**. The Council did not make any changes to the Commission proposal.

The proposal follows on from the Council and the European Parliament's decision of 21 October 2020 to empower France to negotiate with the United Kingdom a continuation of the binational administration of the Channel Tunnel (see press release of 14 October 2020 below).

According to the draft regulation, the safety authorisation issued to the infrastructure manager of the Channel Tunnel would remain valid for two months after the end of the transition period defined in the withdrawal agreement. This is the time period which the French authorities consider would be needed to allow the French National Safety Authority to issue its own authorisation for the section of the Channel Fixed Link under French jurisdiction.

Moreover, the measure provides that certain safety certificates and licences which have been issued under EU law to rail companies established in the UK and using the cross-border infrastructure linking the EU and the UK through the Channel tunnel should be extended for nine months from the date of application of the regulation.

By temporarily extending the validity of these safety authorisations and certificates, the measure gives the French authorities more time to arrange the future binational administration, so that railways can continue to operate in the Channel Tunnel after 1 January.

Without this measure, traffic in the Channel Tunnel, a fundamental connectivity link between the EU and the UK, would be interrupted.

Procedure

The Commission published its proposal on 27 November 2020.

Both the Council and the European Parliament will need to agree on the final text. The negotiations between the co-legislators on the proposal are taking place as a matter of urgency.