

EU-UK relations: Coreper agrees mandate on Channel tunnel railway safety



The EU is working on legislation to ensure the **safe and efficient operation of the Channel Tunnel railway connection** between continental Europe and the United Kingdom (Channel Fixed Link) after the end of the Brexit transition period. Today, the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee agreed on a negotiation mandate on two proposals aimed at maintaining a **single safety authority**, which would continue to apply the **same set of rules** over the whole infrastructure, including in its section under UK jurisdiction.

Currently, all matters concerning the operation of the Channel Fixed Link are supervised by an Intergovernmental Commission set up by the Treaty of Canterbury, signed between France and the UK in 1986.

Under the **Council mandate**, France will be empowered to negotiate an amendment to the Canterbury Treaty and the EU railway safety and interoperability rules will be amended so that the Intergovernmental Commission can be maintained as the safety authority competent for the application of EU law within the Channel Fixed Link.

The draft regulation amending the safety and interoperability provisions will be split into two draft regulations, in order to amend the Statute of the European Court of Justice in a manner that respects the Court's prerogatives while avoiding a delay in the start of the negotiations.

A swift adoption of the draft decision and draft regulation will allow the prompt start of the talks between France and the UK. The adoption of the amendments to the Statute of the ECJ will be essential at the end of these negotiations, before France is authorised to sign and conclude the actual agreement.

The negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament on the two proposals are taking place as a matter of urgency.

COVID-19 transport measures: Council agrees its position on temporary

derogations in support of the rail sector



The EU is working on additional temporary rules to **mitigate the severe effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the rail sector**. Today member states' ambassadors agreed on a mandate regarding a proposal to give member states the possibility to help the sector by providing relief from certain infrastructure charges for rail companies, while ensuring a timely refund for infrastructure providers.

These targeted emergency rules are designed to ensure the continuity of rail transport by reducing the risk of COVID-19-related bankruptcies in the sector, which has been badly affected by a temporary lack of demand for transport services. To ensure the fair treatment of operators, the relief measures will apply in a strictly neutral, economically justified and transparent way. A sustainable rail sector is key to achieving EU climate goals and ensuring connectivity across Europe, and is one of the top priorities of the German presidency.

Andreas Scheuer, German Federal Minister for Transport and Digital Infrastructure, President of the Council

Council mandate

The temporary rules on relief from rail infrastructure charges will apply from 1 March 2020 until 31 December 2020, and are extendable if necessary. They entail a relaxation of obligations with regard to track access charges, reservation charges and mark-ups.

In its text the Council has specified that, where appropriate, member states may apply the derogation concerning track access charges according to market segments, such as passenger or freight transport, in a transparent, objective and non-discriminatory way.

It is for each member state to decide whether to implement any of these derogations or not. The Council has added an obligation for member states to inform the Commission of any measures they take, as well as an obligation for the Commission to make this information publicly available.

If needed, these derogations may be extended by means of Commission delegated acts. Under the Council mandate, the reference period can be extended by up to six months at a time, and by up to 18 months in total after the entry into force of the regulation.

The draft regulation will enter into force the day after its publication in

the EU Official Journal.

The negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament are taking place as a matter of urgency.

Next steps

The mandate agreed today by the Permanent Representatives Committee allows the presidency to liaise with the European Parliament on the final text before the Parliament adopts its first reading position.

Applying for asylum at national borders: EASO report outlines divergences across EU Member States

Applying for asylum at national borders: EASO report outlines divergences across EU Member States

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has published a [new report](#) outlining the different practices in EU+ Member States¹ using border procedures to process asylum applications.

As part of efforts to establish fast and efficient procedures for international protection in Europe, increasing focus has been put on the external borders of the EU. One solution which has been put forward is a more extensive use of border procedures to efficiently process applicants for international protection directly upon arrival.

A 'border procedure' refers to an application for international protection which is made at the border of a country, such as at an airport or at a land border crossing. In such cases, EU+ countries may choose to decide on such applications directly at the border or in transit zones.

Currently, at the level of national legislation, EU Member States do not have a uniform way of applying the border procedure provided by the Asylum Procedures Directive ([APD](#)). As a result, national border procedures are not necessarily comparable, nor applied in similar circumstances.

The report gathers detailed information on national border procedures to inform discussions on the topic. EASO's current mandate focuses on organising, coordinating and promoting the exchange of information across asylum authorities in Member States, as well as with the European Commission, rather than monitoring and evaluating the implementation of asylum procedures in practice. The report therefore concentrates primarily on explaining the current legislation on border procedures in EU+ countries, touching to a

lesser extent on their implementation on the ground.

While the use of border procedures is envisaged primarily for cases that appear to have less merit, their application has stirred up debate. The report includes concerns which have been raised by international organisations and NGOs, in particular in relation to safeguarding the rights of persons to seek refuge. For more information on select case law related to border procedures, consult the [EASO Case Law Database](#)

For more information on special procedures used for asylum applications in EU+ countries, consult the [EASO Asylum Report 2020](#)

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: press@easo.europa.eu.

¹Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

New debate series by EEA: How does COVID-19 impact the environment and climate?

We need to ensure that our recovery from the corona virus pandemic moves us to a future in line with the ambition of the European Green Deal. Faced with unprecedented challenges within a relatively short time frame, we need to act quickly and decisively. These online debates aim to share the existing knowledge and trigger action towards our shared European goals.

Hans Bruyninckx, EEA Executive Director

The aim of the debates is to contribute to policymaking by bringing the latest knowledge, research and issues to the attention of key stakeholders, including policymakers and influencers that are shaping the future in these uncertain times. Viewers can follow the debates which will be streamed on a regular basis between September and December on [the EEA's Facebook page](#).

In addition to the debate series, the EEA has also today put online a database of a number of studies, reports and other research from across Europe, looking at the impact of COVID-19 and the climate and environment.

The database will be regularly updated as new research becomes available and these publications are shared with us by our partners, mainly in the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet).

The database complements an already active [Post Corona Planet](#) platform, which aims to bring together knowledge and reflections from across Europe and beyond, and to facilitate an informed debate on how this pandemic affects our path towards a sustainable planet. In early April the EEA published a special COVID-19 air quality viewer to help assess how lockdown and related measures affected concentrations of air pollution.

Online Debates

The first debate '**A sustainable recovery – national perspectives**' takes place on Wednesday, **9 September from 16.30-17.30 CEST** (Copenhagen time).

Dirk Messner, President of the German Environment Agency (UBA) and Hans Mommaas, Director-General of the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) will join our EEA Executive Director Hans Bruyninckx for the discussion on this issue.

To watch the event live, leave comments or questions, please **go to the EEA's [Facebook page](#)**. Additional information on the event is available on the Facebook [event page](#).

Information on the following upcoming debates will be shared on our [debate corner](#). The debates will address topics such as sustainable recovery and the European green deal – the EU perspective, the scientific perspective, nature – planetary boundaries, air quality/ transport, environmental health, climate change, and strategic reflections on Europe's environment in a post-COVID world.

[G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on the poisoning of Alexei Naval](#)



The text of the following statement was released by the G7 foreign ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union.

We, the G7 foreign ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, are united in condemning, in the strongest possible terms, the confirmed poisoning of Alexei Navalny.

Germany has briefed G7 partners on the fact that clinical and toxicological findings by German medical experts and a specialised laboratory of the German armed forces have determined that Mr Navalny is the victim of an attack with a chemical nerve-agent of the “Novichok” group, a substance developed by Russia. Mr Navalny is in intensive care in a Berlin hospital and remains in a serious condition. Our heartfelt thoughts are with his family and we hope for his full and speedy recovery.

Any use of chemical weapons, anywhere, anytime, by anybody, under any circumstances whatsoever, is unacceptable and contravenes the international norms prohibiting the use of such weapons. We, the G7 foreign ministers, call on Russia to urgently and fully establish transparency on who is responsible for this abhorrent poisoning attack and, bearing in mind Russia’s commitments under the Chemical Weapons Convention, to bring the perpetrators to justice.

This attack against opposition leader Navalny is another grave blow against democracy and political plurality in Russia. It constitutes a serious threat to those men and women engaged in defending the political and civil freedoms that Russia herself has committed to guarantee. We call on Russia to fulfill its commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to guarantee these rights, including the right to freedom of expression, to its citizens.

We will continue to monitor closely how Russia responds to international calls for an explanation of the hideous poisoning of Mr Navalny. We remain strongly committed to our support for democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Russia and to bolster our support to the Russian civil society.