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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

on the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2018/643 on rail transport statistics

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM OF THE REPORT

Article 9 of Regulation (EU) 2018/643 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018 on rail transport statistics [1] specifies that, after consulting the European Statistical System Committee, the Commission must submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the implementation of this Regulation and on future developments by 31 December 2020 and every 4 years after that.

The first section of this report outlines the background to the Regulation, the policy context, and the countries and statistics to which the Regulation applies. The second section presents issues linked to the implementation of the Regulation, while the third and fourth sections contain a description of possible future developments and conclusions.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The initial legal basis for rail transport statistics was Regulation (EC) No 91/2003[2]. As this Regulation was substantially amended several times, it was recast in 2018 in the interests of clarity as Regulation (EU) 2018/643, gathering all the changes into one new legal text.

Regulation (EC) No 91/2003 was designed to provide the Commission, other EU institutions, national governments and the general public with comparable, reliable, harmonised, regular and comprehensive statistical data on the rail transport of goods and passengers.

The amendments introduced in 2016 by Regulation (EU) 2016/2032 aimed to update and simplify the original act (and thus reduce the burden for Member States). They also aimed to optimise the existing legal framework for European statistics on rail transport and to align it with the Lisbon Treaty.

1.3 POLICY CONTEXT

Over the last 25 years, the Commission has been actively proposing to restructure the European rail transport market in order to strengthen the position of railways in relation to other modes of transport. The Commission's efforts have concentrated on three major objectives, which are all crucial for developing a strong and competitive rail transport industry:

(1) open the rail transport market to competition;

(2) improve the interoperability and safety of national networks;

(3) develop rail transport infrastructure.

The policy relevance is very high. The White Paper *Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system*[3] set out several goals for a competitive and resource-efficient rail transport system. The priority has since been to achieve a single European railway area by: i) abolishing technical, administrative and legal obstacles which impede entry to national railway markets; and ii)

[1] OJ L 112, 2.5.2018, p. 1.

[2] Regulation (EC) No 91/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2002 on rail transport statistics (OJ L 14, 21.1.2003, p. 1).

[3] COM(2011) 144 final.

completing the European high-speed rail network by 2050, when most passenger journeys over medium distances should be made by rail.

Apart from supporting policy needs, the data collected under Regulation (EU) 2018/643 is also valuable for transport companies, universities, researchers and modellers working in rail transport.

In a questionnaire sent in April 2020, Member States specified the benefits of the data derived from rail statistics. According to their feedback, the data is used by: national authorities; research institutes; the railway industry itself, for analysis and planning; EU institutions; international organisations such as the International Transport Forum and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; and policymakers, for planning, target monitoring and decision-making. Furthermore, the Member States noted that data is needed in order to: observe the evolution of rail transport activity by short-term monitoring (using quarterly data) and by long-term monitoring (using yearly data); conduct national trend analyses and run benchmarks with other countries; and follow how the share of railway transport in the overall European transport is evolving compared to other modes (modal split).

The European Green Deal[4] is the new growth strategy that aims to make the EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities in all policy areas and by making the transition just and inclusive for all. The European Green Deal calls for a 90% reduction in transport emissions by 2050, including the following priority actions for a shift to sustainable and smart mobility:

- boosting 'multimodal' transport;
- supporting automated and connected mobility across transport modes;
- better addressing external costs of transport activities through pricing;
- increasing the production and deployment of sustainable alternative transport fuels; and
- reducing pollution from transport, especially in cities.

To accelerate this shift, a substantial proportion of road freight should move onto rail and inland waterways (today, 75% of inland freight is carried by road).

1.4 COVERAGE OF MEMBER STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES

Regulation (EU) 2018/643 applies directly and entirely to all Member States.

All Member States are required to provide the data stipulated in the Regulation, except for Malta and Cyprus, which do not have rail infrastructure and therefore no rail transport activity.

Data on rail transport is also provided by three European Free Trade Area (EFTA) countries - Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Three candidate countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia and Turkey) and one potential candidate (Bosnia and Herzegovina) provide data on a voluntary basis.

In compliance with Article 6 of Regulation (EU) 2018/643, countries send to Eurostat: (i) detailed annual statistics on goods and passenger transport; (ii) quarterly statistics on goods and passenger transport; (iii) regional statistics on goods and passenger transport (every 5 years, for a reference period of 1 year); (iv) statistics on traffic flows on the rail network (every 5 years, for a reference period of 1 year); and (v) annual statistics on the level of transport activity in goods and passenger transport.

[4] COM(2019) 640 final.

Since 1 February 2020, when the United Kingdom left the European Union, Eurostat has added to its datasets the new aggregate 'European Union - 27 countries (from 2020)' that excludes the United Kingdom. During the transition period until the end of 2020, the United Kingdom is continuing to send data to Eurostat, and this data is made available to users.

2. FOLLOW-UP TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGULATION

2.1 COMPLIANCE WITH THE LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

There is very good compliance with the obligations defined in Regulation (EU) 2018/643 for providing data, with all Member States delivering the requested datasets. Short delays may sometimes occur due to changes at national level (e.g. IT changes or changes in the rail market). However, these delays have never had an impact on the production of rail transport statistics. Countries follow the agreed methodology, ensuring the production of high-quality, reliable statistics on rail freight and passenger transport in Europe.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS USED IN MEMBER STATES

Rail undertakings collect data using the methods adopted by each country and send it to national authorities, which are in charge of processing the data. Eurostat's *Reference Manual on Rail transport statistics*[5] includes a chapter dedicated to national methodologies with a subchapter on data compilation and quality management.

2.3 ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR MEMBER STATES

Reducing administrative burdens and simplification are continuous concerns for Eurostat. Based on feedback from Member States, Eurostat, in cooperation with the national statistical institutes, implements specific actions to reduce the burden of data collection and reporting.

Following requests from Member States, Regulation (EC) No 91/2003 was amended in 2016 to reduce and simplify the administrative burden for them. The following annexes were modified:

- Annex B - 'Annual statistics on goods transport (simplified reporting)' - was removed;
- Annex C - 'Annual statistics on passenger transport (detailed reporting)' - was simplified by removing Tables C1 ('Passengers transported, by type of transport - provisional data, number of passengers only') and C2 ('International passengers transported, by country of embarkation and by country of disembarkation - provisional data, number of passengers only');
- Annex D - 'Annual statistics on passenger transport (simplified reporting)' - was removed;
- Annex H - 'Accidents data in rail transport' - was removed. Until 2016, Member States provided data on accidents to Eurostat and the European Union Agency for Railways. Since 2016, such data is provided only to the Agency in order to reduce the burden for Member States. The Agency then sends the data to Eurostat for dissemination through its database[6];
- Annex I - 'List of undertakings (reporting on list of undertakings)' - was removed.

[5] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/29567/3217334/Reference+manual+on+Rail+Transport+Statistics+%28Version+8.01%29/ed767b61-7fca-470a-a9e2-582e4aabedcb (Available only in English).

[6] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database (Available in English, French and German).

Eurostat has been working to develop stronger procedures for data validation and quality checks that will provide quick feedback to Member States at a very early stage of data transmission.

According to the input collected from the questionnaire sent to the Member States in April 2020, the framework defined by Regulation (EU) 2018/643 is sufficient to accommodate user needs without putting an excessive burden on respondents. Countries consider that the data is of significant value and that the related burden and cost for respondents and statistical offices in collecting this data are justified in relation to its benefits. Member States recognise that environmentally friendly logistics are inconceivable without rail transport, a sector that needs to be modernised and strengthened. To support this process, relevant and reliable data is necessary to define and evaluate various measures.

2.4 DATA VALIDATION AND QUALITY OF THE STATISTICAL DATA RECEIVED

While Member States are responsible for the quality of rail transport statistics, the Commission takes all necessary measures to detect errors in the data it receives. Eurostat maintains a reliable IT system for data reception, validation and processing and performs several types of data checks. When errors are detected, countries are requested to send revised data.

Regarding the technical arrangements for data transmission, a high level of standardisation has been achieved. Countries send data to Eurostat via the EDAMIS portal, complying with the requested file structure and record format. A validation process, implemented by the main IT system, performs an early detection of basic errors and erroneous codes, allowing for quick integration of the information in the Eurostat production database.

Once data has been loaded into the Eurostat production database, detailed checks are applied to ensure the quality of the data that has been sent. These quality checks look at the consistency of each country's reporting tables, the consistency of these tables over time and the coherence between different types of tables, and compare results between partner reporting countries (mirror checks).

Overall, the quality of the data is considered to be good. Nevertheless, efforts are still required to reduce the asymmetries highlighted by mirror checks, although some of these asymmetries are due to differences in national methodologies and cannot be easily removed. The reporting of transit data also needs to be improved by harmonising data collection methods in reporting countries.

2.5 METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT TO MEMBER STATES

Eurostat provides constant methodological and technical support to the reporting countries for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2018/643.

As part of this support, Eurostat organises country visits to discuss unclear issues. Furthermore, every 2 years Eurostat organises a meeting of national experts (the Expert Group on Rail Transport Statistics) from all Member States, EFTA countries, candidate countries and potential candidates to exchange good practices and discuss data quality, methodological issues and new projects. The implementation of the Regulation is also a regular agenda item at meetings of the Coordinating Group for Statistics on Transport.

The *Reference Manual on Rail transport statistics* provides guidance to Member States on implementing the Regulation. The Reference Manual is updated regularly (mostly on an annual basis) to include the most recent information, documentation and guidelines relevant to the collection of rail transport statistics.

In 2019, Eurostat, in close cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the International Transport Forum, co-published the fifth edition of the *Glossary for transport statistics*, which includes an updated and improved section on rail transport. The Glossary aims to standardise definitions of transport statistics at European and international level.

2.6 DATA DISSEMINATION

Eurostat releases the data collected under Regulation (EU) 2018/643 through its dissemination database that is freely accessible from the Eurostat website. There are 26 tables on rail transport, which are updated regularly and complemented by detailed metadata files.

Eurostat also produces 'Statistics Explained' articles that provide an analysis of the data for the media and the general public[7]. Data is also disseminated via tailor-made data extractions for users and policymakers, Eurostat news items and Eurostat publications (e.g. the statistical book *Energy, transport and environment statistics*[8]).

3. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF RAIL TRANSPORT STATISTICS

The European Green Deal has announced a set of transformative policies across economic sectors, including transport. Rail freight and passenger transport statistics can help with setting and monitoring policy targets by providing data on volumes of goods transported, numbers of passengers, kilometres travelled, and equipment and infrastructure. Such information is collected under Regulation (EU) 2018/643 and from voluntary questionnaires.

Data confidentiality in some countries limits the potential for collecting this information under Regulation (EU) 2018/643. Eurostat, together with the Member States, will investigate if and how the constraints imposed by data confidentiality can be alleviated.

To have a wider coverage of rail transport statistics, Eurostat has signed an administrative agreement with the European Union Agency for Railways to receive and publish data on:

(i) the length of lines and tracks equipped with the European Railway Traffic Management System (ERTMS);

(ii) the number of rail stations equipped with facilities for persons with reduced mobility.

The first data, published in the third quarter of 2020, is related to the length of lines equipped with the ERTMS.

Moreover, Eurostat is working on the development of a rail distance matrix to help calculate the modal split indicators by distance class without placing additional burdens on the reporting countries. The distance matrix for rail is based on the NUTS 2 level of the classification on regions, so that it matches the collection of regional data for rail transport within Annex IV of Regulation (EU) 2018/643. How the distance matrix develops will depend on the improvement of the geographical networks. Its application will mainly depend on the availability and quality of rail data at regional level.

The geographical coverage of rail transport statistics could be extended as a result of future EU enlargements and the voluntary involvement of additional countries and/or international organisations through cooperation agreements.

[7] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Category:Rail (Available only in English).
[8] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-DK-19-001 (Available only in English).

According to the questionnaire sent in April 2020, Member States do not currently see a need for changes or improvements to Regulation (EU) 2018/643. There are no new user needs to be addressed. However, new national, European and international policy initiatives on sustainability and on transformation of transport systems may create new data needs. Once such needs are identified, they will have to be evaluated and discussed in a timely manner within the Expert Group on Rail Transport Statistics.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Regulation (EU) 2018/643 has been implemented successfully, and the results are considered to be positive. A well-established mechanism in Eurostat and at national level makes it possible to produce statistics that are comparable and of high quality.

Eurostat is doing its utmost to help Member States to implement the Regulation and produce high-quality statistics. It has developed an IT system and has introduced communication methods that aim to minimise the burden of managing data for the reporting countries. Eurostat has also been providing guidance on how to improve the quality of data and reduce the burden of collecting and reporting data.

Rail transport statistics have an immediate application in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies at national and European level. Apart from policymakers, a number of organisations and other users, such as researchers and analysts, have shown an interest in the data, and Eurostat ensures that these rail statistics remain highly visible by disseminating them through a variety of means.