

Position Paper

Noise Differentiated Track Access Charges

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Introduction

In 2015 the European Commission adopted Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/429 (“the Regulation”) that provides the legal framework for noise differentiated track access charges schemes (NDTACs) across the EU. The aim of the Regulation is to incentivise retrofitting through reduced track access charges without jeopardising rail freight competitiveness and with the overall objective of reducing freight noise and improving the well-being of EU citizens.

The Regulation applies to those Member States that have introduced such modifications on infrastructure charges. So far only the Netherlands, Austria and Germany have applied the schemes from the European Union. Switzerland has been applying noise bonus with preferential treatment to silent railway vehicles with respect to the TACs since 2002.

In 2019 the European Commission commenced the Evaluation of the implementation of the NDTACs schemes, namely the progress of the retrofitting of wagons and the impact of the schemes on the overall rail freight sector’s competitiveness.

EIM- European Rail Infrastructure Managers- welcomes the evaluation of the implementation of the Regulation and acknowledges that tackling the issue at source would be the most efficient way forward and could help saving significant resources for the infrastructures while contributing to the modal shift and rail freight competitiveness.

Scope

Member States that may decide to apply incentives for those Railway Undertakings and Wagon Keepers who retrofit their wagons, should comply with the current legislation on schemes which differentiates infrastructure charges.

EIM would like to reiterate that the voluntary nature of the Regulation must be preserved throughout the evaluation and during the potential revision of the NDTAC Regulation. Member States (MS) have different capabilities for national funds and financing systems on incentivising silent and retrofitted wagons, and therefore the Regulation must remain voluntary for all MSs including those countries that have decided to apply NDTACs schemes. The complementary degree of administrative complexity introduced by NDTAC on the charging system has also an influence on the choice of Member States to not introducing it for the scheduled short period of time. Its non-obligatory status can contribute to rail competitiveness vis-à-vis other transport modes.

Interoperability

Areas and countries with certain winter climate and conditions, where the noise-reducing brake blocks do not offer a fully functional alternative to traditional brake blocks due to safety reasons, need to be approached from a different angle. As silent wagons with composite brake blocks today do not have fully functional braking capacity in some specific winter conditions, introducing schemes for retrofitted wagons on a broad basis may have risks for the interoperability on networks where such conditions may occur.

Noise TSI

The evaluation of the NDTAC Regulation must take into consideration the developments in and be consistent and proportionate with the measures already existing in EU Regulations, such as the TSI subsystem rolling stock- noise; where both regulations share a common objective to reduce rail freight noise related health risks to EU citizens.

Noise TSI defines quieter routes as part of the network with a traffic of more than 12 trains per night. It can be expected that most of the freight wagons circulating in some Member States shall be retrofitted or replaced by the date of the implementation of TSI Noise, in 2024. For this reason, EIM does not oppose a potential prolongation of the NDTACs in the countries that apply them for an additional two years.

Financing

Since the Regulation came into force, more and more freight wagons have been retrofitted with composite brake blocks. The current Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) call for the retrofitting is a good example of the efforts in reducing rail freight noise at EU level. The NDTAC schemes can be complementary to CEF and will speed up the process of retrofitting all existing wagons.

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EIM, the association of European Rail Infrastructure Managers, was established in 2002 to promote the interests and views of the independent infrastructure managers in Europe, following the liberalisation of the EU railway market. It also provides technical expertise to the appropriate European bodies such as the European Union Agency for Railways. EIM's primary goal is promoting growth of rail traffic and the development of an open sustainable, efficient, customer orientated rail network in Europe. For more information, visit www.eimrail.org or follow us on Twitter: [@EIMrail](https://twitter.com/EIMrail)

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