



Norms of European Model Railroads  
**Railway Epochs**

**NEM**  
**800**  
Page 1 of 2

Binding Norm

*(Unofficial Translation from Italian)*

2003 Edition

## General

Different epochs in railway history can be clearly distinguished by technological developments and by changes in the organization and operation of the railways themselves. The epochs are often manifest in the fixed installations (e.g., by the styles of the lineside structures and signaling equipment) and in the appearance, color, and marking of railway rolling stock.

Model railways should also be set in a specific epoch with regard to theme, scenery, and rolling stock. Manufacturers of railway modeling products are hereby encouraged to ensure that their efforts are respectful of the divisions between epochs and that an indication of the appropriate epoch is given for each item in their catalog.

## Epochs

From a modeling viewpoint, it is possible to distinguish five Epochs in the history of European railways (see Table), but as a general rule the exact time span of each Epoch cannot be precisely defined.

Numerous intermediate changes in railway appearance and practice require further subdivision into Periods; however the definition of an exact Period on the timeline is only possible for a single country or railway administration.

The establishment of Epochs and their subdivision into Periods, characteristic of each country, is provided in these standards beginning with NEM 801.

## Table

Name	Approximate Timeframe	Characteristics
EPOCH I	Until 1925	Era of initial railway construction from the first services to the completion of a network of interconnected lines. Appearance of numerous private and state-run railways, primarily of regional interest. Development of steam locomotives to their definitive form. Colorful paint schemes applied to railway rolling stock. Golden Age of railways due to their monopolistic pre-eminence among forms of transportation.
EPOCH II	1925-1945	Establishment in several countries of large national railway administrations. Progressive unification of construction and operating rules, and standardization of rolling stock construction. Introduction of electric traction.

Name	Approximate Timeframe	Characteristics
EPOCH III	1945-1970	<p>Postwar reconstruction and reorganization of the railway network.</p> <p>Beginnings of widespread use of electric and diesel traction allowing a gradual reduction in the use of steam locomotives.</p> <p>Development of fleets of modern rolling stock and new technologies in signaling.</p>
EPOCH IV	1970-1990	<p>Progressive conclusion of the change to electrical and diesel traction.</p> <p>Introduction of the unified coach and wagon numbering systems.</p>
EPOCH V	From 1990	<p>Advent of high speed lines</p> <p>Substantial reworking of the unified numbering systems.</p> <p>Adoption of colorful paint schemes.</p>