

# European Year of Rail (2021)

2020/0035(COD) - 04/03/2020 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to designate 2021 as the 'European Year of Rail'.

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: in its Communication of 11 December 2019, the Commission set out a [European Green Deal](#) for the European Union and its citizens. In its [resolution](#) of 15 January 2020, the European Parliament welcomed this deal and called for the necessary transition to a climate-neutral society by 2050 at the latest.

Transport accounts for a quarter of the Union's greenhouse gas emissions, and still growing. To achieve climate neutrality, a 90% reduction in transport emissions is needed by 2050.

The European Green Deal implies to accelerate the shift to sustainable and smart mobility to address these challenges. In particular, a substantial part of the 75% of inland freight carried today by road should shift onto rail and inland waterways. While the share of passenger rail in the Union land transport has only slightly increased since 2007, the share of freight has decreased.

Rail has a significant role to play as a game changer to achieve the climate neutrality objective by 2050. It is one of the most environmentally friendly and energy-efficient transport modes. It is the only mode that has consistently reduced its greenhouse gas emissions and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions since 1990 and increasingly uses renewable energy sources.

2021 shall be an important year for the Union rail policy:

- it will be the first full year where the rules agreed under the Fourth Railway Package will be implemented throughout the Union, namely on the opening of the market of domestic passenger services and on reducing costs and administrative burden for railway undertakings operating across the Union;
- there is a growing public interest in railways, including in night trains, in a number of Member States, as also illustrated by the popularity of #DiscoverEU;
- the international arts festival 'Europalia' will dedicate its 2021 edition to the influence of railways on the arts and highlight the role of rail as a powerful promotor of social, economic and industrial change.

CONTENT: the proposal aims to **designate 2021 as the 'European Year of Rail'** and responds to the objective of promoting rail transport in line with the objectives set out in the Commission's communication on the European Green Deal.

## *Objectives*

The objective of the European Year shall be to encourage and support the efforts of the Union, the Member States, regional and local authorities, and other organisations to increase the share of passengers and freight moving by rail. In particular, the European Year shall:

- promote rail as a sustainable, innovative and safe mode of transport, in particular by highlighting the role of rail as a game changer to help reaching the Union's climate neutrality objective by 2050 and by reaching out to the wider public, especially youth;
- highlight the European, cross-border dimension of rail, that brings citizens closer together, allows them to explore the Union in all its diversity, fosters cohesion and contributes to integrate the Union internal market;
- enhance the contribution of rail to Union economy, industry and society, covering in particular aspects related to regional development, industrial competitiveness, sustainable tourism, innovation, employment, education, youth and culture, and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities;
- contribute to promoting rail as an important element of the relations between the Union and neighbouring countries, in particular, in the Western Balkans.

### ***Content of the measures***

As with all European Years in the past, the main objective is to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities and highlight the role of the Union in promoting shared solutions. Measures shall include information and promotion campaigns, events, projects and initiatives at Union, national, regional and local levels. They shall serve to convey key messages and disseminate information about examples of good practice.

The European Year shall be an opportunity to encourage Member States authorities and the sector to work together to promote rail transport. Every effort shall be made to ensure that the activities organised in the course of the European Year are tailored to meet the needs and circumstances of each Member State. Member States are therefore requested to appoint a national coordinator responsible for organising their participation in the European Year of Rail. A European steering group, including representatives of the national coordinators, shall be set up.

The Commission shall convene meetings of the national coordinators in order to coordinate the running of the European Year and to exchange information regarding its implementation at national and EU level.

### ***Budgetary implications***

The necessary financial allocation for the implementation of this Decision for the period 2020-2021 is estimated to be EUR 8 million. Implementation of the European Year will involve appropriate funding to be determined in the context of the budgetary procedures for 2020, and 2021 in accordance with the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.