

European Year of Rail (2021)

2020/0035(COD) - 15/12/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 684 votes to 9, with 2 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Rail.

Parliament adopted its position at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure, amending the Commission proposal as follows:

Objectives

The amended text stressed that despite operational and financial constraints related to the COVID-19 crisis, crucial connections for the transport of both passengers and essential goods have been maintained. Continuity was ensured mainly thanks to the employees who have continued working under difficult and uncertain conditions. The strategic role played by rail during the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted that achieving the single European railway area.

Against this background, the specific objectives of the European Year shall be to:

- promote rail as a sustainable, innovative, interconnected and intermodal, safe and affordable mode of transport, in particular by highlighting the role of rail: (i) as a game changer helping to achieve the EU's climate neutrality objective by 2050, (ii) as a pillar of an efficient logistic network, capable of guaranteeing essential services, even during unexpected crises, and (iii) as a transport mode that reaches out to the wider public, especially the young;
- highlight the European, cross-border dimension of rail, that brings citizens closer together by ensuring better connectivity within and with its geographical periphery;
- enhance the contribution of rail to the EU's economy, to its industry, including to its global competitiveness and to improving accessibility for persons with disabilities or persons with reduced mobility, and in particular paying attention to the needs of elderly people;
- build on rail's power to stimulate the collective imagination, particularly through rail's history and its cultural heritage;
- promote the attractiveness of the railway professions;
- promote an EU night train network;
- create public awareness of rail's potential role in the development of sustainable tourism in Europe;
- promote the key role of railways in sustainable end-to-end mobility;
- stimulate discussion on how to modernise rolling stock and on how to further develop and increase the capacity of railway infrastructure in order to facilitate the broader use of passenger and freight transport by rail;
- promote events and initiatives to disseminate information on the rights of rail passengers and to stimulate cooperation among all actors in order to improve customer information and ticketing, including the offer of through-tickets and developing innovative digital multi-modal tickets.

Content of the measures

The measures should be closely coordinated with ongoing activities to promote rail transport. These measures should include:

- initiatives and events designed to create a positive image to increase confidence in rail, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, and to promote the attractiveness of rail for the transport of more people and goods;
- initiatives in Member States to encourage work-related travel and home-to-work solutions by rail;
- partnerships and events in areas such as cooperation with European train museums and cultural events (e. g. film festivals and art exhibitions), mobile exhibition trains across the EU, the provision of Interrail passes for young people, in particular under the Erasmus programme;
- the promotion of projects aimed at providing integrated door-to-door transport solutions in combination with other modes of transport.

The Commission should consider initiating, during the European Year:

- a study on the feasibility of creating a European label to promote goods and products transported by rail so as to encourage businesses to switch their transport to rail; and
- a feasibility study with a view to introducing a rail connectivity index and showing the potential of rail to compete with other modes of transport.

For the evaluation of the initiatives, the Commission should establish key performance indicators.