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Subject: Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Rail (2021)

– Outcome of proceedings

Delegations will find attached the text of the above-mentioned proposal, as endorsed by the Permanent Representatives Committee on 18 November 2020, following the negotiations with the European Parliament.

Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Rail (2021)

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 91 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee¹,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions²,

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure,³

Whereas:

- (1) In its Communication of 11 December 2019⁴, the Commission set out a European Green Deal for the European Union and its citizens. The European Green Deal is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the Union into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.
- (2) In its conclusions of 12 December 2019⁵, the European Council endorsed the objective of achieving a climate-neutral European Union by 2050.

¹ *OJ C 364, 28.10.2020, p. 149.*

² *Opinion of 14 October 2020 (not yet published in the Official Journal).*

³ *Position of the European Parliament of ... [(OJ ...)/(not yet published in the Official Journal)] and decision of the Council of*

⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM/2019/640 final)

⁵ European Council conclusions of 12 December 2019

- (3) In its resolution of 15 January 2020⁶, the European Parliament welcomed the Commission’s communication on ‘The European Green Deal’ and called for the necessary transition to a climate-neutral society by 2050 at the latest.
- (4) In line with the objectives set out in the Commission Communication on the European Green Deal, there is a need to transform the Union economy and to rethink policies, in particular in the field of transport and mobility, which implies accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility. Transport accounts for a quarter of the Union’s greenhouse gas emissions, and *that share is still growing*. To achieve climate neutrality, a 90% reduction in transport emissions is needed by 2050. Achieving sustainable *intermodal* transport *requires* putting users first and providing them with more affordable, accessible, healthier, cleaner and *more energy-efficient* alternatives to their current mobility habits, *while encouraging those who are already using sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport*.
- (4a) 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. *Important investments are needed for that shift, including in the context of the recovery, and an essential part of them relate to the implementation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and to an increase of the Rail Freight Corridors' efficiency*.
- (5) Rail has a significant role to play as a game changer in achieving the climate neutrality objective by 2050. It is one of the most environmentally friendly and energy-efficient transport modes. Rail is largely electrified and emits far less CO₂ than equivalent travel by road or air, and is the only transport mode that has consistently reduced its greenhouse gas emissions and CO₂ emissions since 1990. In addition, rail has decreased its energy consumption between 1990-2016⁷ and increasingly uses renewable energy sources.

⁶ European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal (2019/2956(RSP))

⁷ DG MOVE Statistical Pocketbook 2019 “EU transport in figures” (source: Eurostat)

(5a) *The COVID-19 crisis has hit the transport sector exceptionally hard. Despite operational and financial constraints, the sector has maintained crucial connections both for the transport of people and of essential goods. This has been possible 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 Rail Area is necessary both for facilitating the supply of essential goods such as food, medicines and fuels, particularly in exceptional circumstances, and for reaching wider transport policy objectives.

(6) *By connecting the Union's main transport routes with its peripheral, mountainous and remote regions and territories, including at regional and local level, by establishing and reinstating missing regional cross-border rail links, the rail sector contributes to social, economic and territorial cohesion on continental, national, regional and local level.*

Furthermore, remote and rural areas often have fewer and less-well-developed networks that guarantee the provision of basic services to the population. Peripheral regions are often faced with the doubly difficult situation of being rural in character and at the periphery of national networks.

(7) *While the share of rail passengers in Union land transport has only slightly increased since 2007, the share of rail freight has decreased. Many obstacles remain to achieving a true Single European Rail Area. Among other obstacles, rail is sometimes hampered by outdated business and operational practices, by ageing infrastructure and rolling stock, and by noisy wagons. Overcoming those obstacles together with cost reduction, the study of Union schemes to supplement national mechanisms for non-discriminatory support for rail operators, and accelerated innovation will allow rail to realise its full potential, while ensuring the functioning of the internal market, increasing traffic and further improving the already high safety levels. The rail sector therefore needs a further boost to become more attractive to travellers, employees and businesses alike.*

(7a) *Transport Ministers from a majority of Member States have expressed their commitment to support a European agenda for international passenger rail through a political statement presented at the informal video conference of EU transport ministers on 4th of June 2020.*

- (8) In order to promote rail transport in line with the objectives set out in the Commission Communication on the European Green Deal, including with regard to sustainable and smart mobility, the year 2021 should be designated as European Year of Rail. 2021 will 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 **and on providing the European Union Agency for Railways with additional tasks in lowering technical barriers**. 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. Moreover, 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, industrial **and ecological** change. **The European Year of Rail should contribute to a pan-European debate on the future of railways.**
- (8+) **At Union level, the necessary financial allocation for the implementation of this Decision will involve appropriate funding to be determined in the context of the budgetary process for 2021 in accordance with the MFF 2021-2027. Without prejudice to the powers of the budgetary authority, the aim should be to provide funding for the implementation of this Decision from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022 of at least EUR 8 million.**
- (8a) **Commuters account for 80 to 90% of all rail passengers. This means that urban agglomerations are significant contributors to the overall performance of passenger rail transport. Smart urban mobility depends on modernising and renovating under-used suburban and regional lines to deliver a low ecological impact and social and economic cohesion.**
- (8b) **During the European Year of Rail, the Commission should consider initiating a study on developing a European "Green Rail" label for goods and products transported by rail so as to encourage businesses to switch their transport to rail. Likewise, the Commission should consider initiating a study on the feasibility for introducing a "rail connectivity index", aimed at categorising the level of integration achieved through the services on the rail network.**

- (8c) The role of motivated staff cannot be underestimated, and guarantees the smoothness of operations. In order to reach its full potential, the rail sector needs to diversify its workforce and in particular attract women and young workers. That perspective should be promoted at all institutional levels.*
- (8d) Enhancing the attractiveness of rail requires the services to be user-centred and be organised and engineered to deliver good value, consistent dependability, excellent service quality and attractive pricing.*
- (9) Since the objectives of this Decision, namely to promote rail transport as a sustainable, innovative and safe mode of transport and as an important element of the relations between the Union and neighbouring countries, to highlight the European, cross-border dimension of rail, to enhance the contribution of rail to Union economy, industry and society, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States given the need for transnational exchange of information and Union-wide dissemination of good practice, but can rather be better achieved at Union level, the Union may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, as set out in Article 5 TEU. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Decision does not go beyond what is necessary in order to achieve those objectives,*

HAVE ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

Subject matter

The year 2021 shall be designated as the ‘European Year of Rail’ (hereinafter referred to as the ‘European Year’).

Article 2

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

- (a) promote rail as a sustainable, ***innovative, interconnected and intermodal***, safe ***and affordable*** mode of transport, in particular by highlighting the role of rail:
 - as a game changer to help achieving the Union’s climate neutrality objective by 2050,
 - ***as a pillar of an efficient logistic network, capable of guaranteeing essential services, even during unexpected crises, and***
 - as a transport mode that reaches out to the wider public, especially youth, ***also showing rail as an attractive career opportunity;***
- (b) highlight the European, cross-border dimension of rail, that brings citizens closer together, allows them to explore the Union in all its diversity, fosters ***socio-economic and territorial cohesion*** and contributes to integrate the Union internal market, ***in particular by ensuring better connectivity within and with its geographical periphery, including through regional cross-border connections;***
- (c) enhance the contribution of rail to Union economy, to its industry, ***including to its global competitiveness, to its commerce*** and to society, in particular as regards aspects related to regional ***and local*** development, sustainable tourism, education, youth and culture, and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities ***or reduced mobility paying attention to elderly people in particular;***

- (d) contribute to promoting rail as an important element of the relations between the Union and *its neighbourhood*, building on the interest and needs in partner countries and on [...] expertise in rail transport *both within and beyond the Union*;
- (db) *build on rail's power for collective imagination, particularly through rail's history and its cultural heritage, recalling the role that rail has played in creating European prosperity and the role of rail today in developing cutting-edge technologies*;
- dd) *promote the attractiveness of the railway profession, in particular highlighting the request of new skills, the importance of fair and safe working conditions, and addressing the need to increase diversity in the workforce*;
- (e) *promote the key role of railways in international passenger transport within the Union*;
- (ea) *promote a Union night train network and encourage initiatives that underline the cross-border nature by using symbols that represent union*;
- (eb) *create public awareness of the potential role of rail for European sustainable tourism*;
- (f) *promote the key role of railways in sustainable end-to-end mobility, connecting hubs and allowing attractive and smart transfer between modes of transport*;
- (g) *contribute to the implementation of the Fourth Railway Package and raising awareness of the measures required to establish the Single European Rail Area, based on a well-functioning Trans-European Transport Network*;
- (h) *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 broader use of passenger and freight transport by rail, underlining in this context the importance of the cooperation among infrastructure managers, research and innovation and the role of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking*;

- (i) *promote events and initiatives to disseminate information on the rights of rail passengers and to stimulate cooperation among all actors to improve customer information and ticketing, including the offer of through- tickets and developing innovative digital multi-modal tickets. These events should also inform about current challenges in this respect, for instance the need for data sharing among the actors.*

Article 3

Content of measures

1. The measures to be taken to achieve the objectives set out in Article 2 shall *be closely coordinated with on-going activities promoting rail transport. [...] They* shall include the following activities at Union, national, regional or local level, *organised in partnerships or individually and* linked to the objectives of the European Year:
 - (a) initiatives and events to promote debate, *build a positive image*, raise awareness and facilitate citizens, businesses and public authorities' engagement in order to *increase trust in rail, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, and* to attract more people and goods to *using* rail as a means of combating climate change, through multiple channels and tools, including events in Member States, *while also highlighting the safety and comfort of travelling by rail;*
 - (ab) *initiatives in Members States to encourage in both the public and private sector business-travel and commuting patterns by rail;*
 - (b) information, exhibitions, inspiration, education and awareness-raising campaigns *as well as showing demonstration and information trains* to encourage changes in passenger, consumer and business behaviour and to stimulate an active contribution of the general public to achieving the objectives of more sustainable transport;
 - (c) sharing experience and good practices of national, regional and local authorities, civil society, business and schools on promoting the use of rail and on how to implement behavioural change at all levels;

- (d) the undertaking of studies and innovative activities and the dissemination of their results on a European or national scale; [...]
- (e) the promotion of projects and networks related to the European Year, including via the media, social networks and other on-line communities;
- (e+) partnerships and events such as those set out in the Annex;***
- (ea) identification and promotion of best practices to create a level-playing field for different modes of transport;***
- (f) promotion of projects and activities aiming at raising awareness of sustainable end-to-end mobility which delivers seamless "door to door" travel solutions in combination with other modes, including active travel, and sustainable and smart logistics;***
- (g) promotion of projects and activities fostering the awareness on and the importance of the Single European Rail Area, notably as regards on-going implementation, actions facilitating international railway journeys and actions for digital passenger information, such as providing real-time information about journey offers, fares and timetables, including from independent providers, facilitating comparison; and***
- (h) promotion with a view to the realisation of an extended, modernised and interoperable railway infrastructure, including a European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), terminals offering modal shift options, as well as modernised rolling stock.***

1a. The Commission shall consider initiating, during the European Year,

- a) 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***
- b) a study on the feasibility for introducing a rail connectivity index aimed at categorising the level of integration achieved through the services on the rail network and showing the potential of rail to compete with other modes of transport.***

The Commission shall inform of its plans the European Parliament and the Council at the latest by 31 March 2021.

2. The Union institutions and bodies, as well as the Member States, at Union and national level respectively, may refer to the European Year and make use of its visual identity in promoting the activities referred to in paragraph 1.

Article 4

Coordination at Member State level

The organisation of participation in the European Year at national level is a responsibility of the Member States.[...] ***They*** shall ensure the coordination of relevant activities at national level ***and appoint national contact persons to ensure coordination at Union level.***

Article 5

Coordination at Union level

1. The Commission shall regularly convene meetings of ***the national contact persons*** in order to coordinate the running of the European Year. Those meetings shall also serve as opportunities to exchange information regarding the implementation of the European Year at national and Union level; Representatives of the European Parliament may participate in those meetings as observers.
2. The coordination of the European Year at Union level shall have a transversal approach with a view to creating synergies between the various Union programmes and initiatives that fund projects in the field of rail transport or that have a rail dimension.
3. The Commission shall convene regular meetings of stakeholders and representatives of organisations or bodies active in the field of rail transport, including existing transnational networks, relevant NGOs, ***universities and technology centres***, as well as ***representatives*** of youth organisations and communities, ***organisations representing persons with disabilities and reduced mobility***, to assist it in implementing the European Year at Union level.

The Commission may, budget allowing, organise calls for proposals and projects that can receive support for their outstanding contribution to the objectives of the *European Year*.

Article 6

International cooperation

For the purpose of the European Year, where necessary, the Commission shall cooperate with competent international organisations, while ensuring the visibility of the Union's participation.

Article 7

Monitoring and evaluation

By 31 December 2022, the Commission shall submit a report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the initiatives provided for in this Decision. ***For the evaluation of the initiatives, the Commission shall establish key performance indicators. Those performance indicators shall be recorded in the report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. For the purpose of the report, Member States shall provide information to the Commission on the activities they have been responsible for.***

Article 8

Entry into force

This Decision shall enter into force on the [...] day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Events and partnerships

This annex sets out an indicative list of events linked to the European Year of Rail :

- *Partnerships with film festivals throughout Europe to highlight the prominent place of rail in cinema production; cooperation with European rail museums and existing cultural events such as film festivals and art exhibitions.*
- *Partnerships together with the European Union Agency for Railways to emphasise:*
 - (i) the performance of the sector in Europe;*
 - (ii) the know-how of actors in the sector, in particular of rail workers;*
 - (iii) the advantages of rail in terms of safety and environmental protection;*
 - (iv) career opportunities for pupils, students and apprentices.*
- *Mobile exhibition trains in the Union to inform the public about the objectives of the European Year and to highlight the attractiveness of its many messages.*
- *Provision of Inter-rail passes for young people in connection with Erasmus studies or competitions to extend the reach of the European Year.*
- *Use of*
 - (i) stations as places of art, urban meeting places and economic, cultural and civic hub;*
 - (ii) railway museums to relay the messages of the European Year.*