

European Year of Rail (2021)

2020/0035(COD) - 14/10/2020 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the report by Anna DEPNAY-GRUNENBERG (Greens/EFA, DE) on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of the Railways (2021).

The committee recommended that the European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission proposal as follows.

Objectives

Members recalled that, even in European countries virtually paralysed by the global health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, railways and urban rail systems have continued to ensure the movement of goods and basic services. They expressed their support of the proposal for the 'European Year of the Rail 2021' while calling on the Commission to be more ambitious.

In particular, the European Year shall also:

- promote rail as the backbone of sustainable, innovative, intermodal, safe and affordable transport and as an efficient logistic network, capable of guaranteeing essential services, even during unexpected crises;
- promote the role of rail in reaching the Union's climate neutrality objective as soon as possible and by 2050, including by reaching out to the wider public, especially to people with disabilities and reduced mobility, as well as to youth;
- strengthen rail, including by improving the cross-border cooperation among infrastructure managers to facilitate better rail connectivity across borders, including cross-border charter trains;
- develop and communicate a modal shift in tourism policy as a network that can connect rural areas and can boost, and create public awareness of, a European sustainable tourism;
- contribute to the integration of the Union's internal market, while promoting the completion of the TEN-T, thus putting an end to bottlenecks mainly in cross-border areas, and to make transport more interoperable by offering comprehensive solutions for both passengers and goods;
- support research and innovation in the railway sector, in particular through Shift2Rail, notably with a view to improving the quality of rail services and their decarbonisation;
- strengthen rail transport in agglomerations and suburbs to promote climate-friendly door-to-door transport, including through an easily understandable system of passenger rights promoting social and economic inclusion;
- promoting the existing EU night train network;
- promote the attractiveness of the railway profession, including by encouraging fair conditions of service and protection of employees against abuse;
- highlight the value of trains, railway stations and rail infrastructure as an integral part of the Union's industrial cultural heritage.

Content of the measures

The measures to be taken to achieve the objectives shall include initiatives to:

- emphasise the essential role of rail in ‘door-to-door’ transport and encourage work-to-work and home-to-work solutions by rail;
- develop through-ticketing and digital multi-modal tickets;
- promote investment in terminals and rolling stock as an optimal modal shift option that will contribute to the decarbonisation of freight transport;
- improving digitisation, in particular for the provision of real-time information about fares and timetables;
- promoting a modal shift in tourism;
- ensure that EU funding for recovery efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are used to massively expand and improve Europe's rail infrastructure.

With a view to identifying areas where investment in rail infrastructure is particularly needed, the Commission is invited to examine the possibility of creating a rail connectivity index to assess the consistency, quality and diversity of the offer as well as its accessibility and intermodal options to measure the integration of the network.

Members also introduced an annex setting out a non-exhaustive list of events to be organised during the Year of the Rail, supported by various partnerships according to their scope.

Budget

Members proposed that the financial envelope for the implementation of the Decision for the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022 shall be EUR 16 million. The annual appropriations shall be authorised by the European Parliament and the Council within the limits of the multiannual financial framework.