

【欧州】【鉄道】

Road/Railways - Environmental friendly vehicles and railways: The EU' s Year of Rail 2021

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【概要 : Summary】

Every year, the EU chooses a special theme to bring a theme or issue to the attention of the wider public in order to underline the political importance of a certain topic. In this year 2021, the EU institutions have agreed to choose the topic “railways”. The railways in Europe are expected to contribute to the European Green Deal target of reaching climate neutrality by 2050. In particular the European Year of Rail intends to promote railways as a sustainable, innovative and safe mode of transport, by reaching out to the wider public and especially to the youth.

The European railway network is already electrified in large parts and railways are the only transport mode that has achieved a constant reduction of GHG emissions since 1990.

Over the last 25 years the European Commission' s efforts in the railway sector have concentrated on improving the conditions in the rail transport market in order to strengthen the railway' s competitiveness compared to other modes of transport. However, the railway sector still needs to become more attractive to travellers and businesses as a means of transport that meets both, their daily and more long-distance mobility needs. The objective of the European Year of Rail will 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. While the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the transport sector hard as well as the tourism sector, it has also shown how freight transport by rail can facilitate the supply of essential goods such as medical devices, food and fuel in exceptional circumstances. The European Year of Rail will be an opportunity to encourage Member States authorities and the sector to work together to promote rail transport.

In the European Year of Rail, a wide range of events are planned to demonstrate the challenges and opportunities offered by rail, and to promote it as a sustainable, innovative and safe mode of transport. The Commission is invited to inform the Council and the European Parliament of its plans by the end of March 2021.

【記事 : Article】

1. Background

Since 1983, every year, the EU chooses a special theme it wants to bring to the attention of a wider public across the EU in order to underline the political importance. As for the year 2021, the EU institutions have agreed to choose the topic “railways “, as it is expected to contribute to the European Green Deal and the environment. The European Green Deal calls in particular for accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility, as the transport

sector's GHG emissions still account for almost 25% of the EU's total GHG emissions.

In order to achieve the goal of climate neutrality by 2050, based on the European Green Deal, the transport sector's GHG emissions must go down by 90%. Instead, railways in the EU only account for 2% of total EU energy consumption in transport and represented only 0.5% of the CO2 emissions from all transport modes in 2016. In fact, railways are largely electrified and emit much less CO2 in a train journey than during a similar journey via road or air travel. It is also the only mode of transport that has consistently reduced its GHG emissions since 1990. However, while rail could significantly contribute to decreasing both, congestion and GHG emissions in the transport sector, the railways still only play a minor role in passenger and freight transport, compared to road transport in the EU. Considering the modal split in transport, while the share of passenger rail in the EU's land transport increased from 7.0% to 7.6% between 2007 and 2016, for freight, since the peak in 2011 (19%), the rail share in the EU's land freight has decreased to 16.65% in 2017. At present, 75% of inland freight is still carried by road transport.

Therefore, in order to achieve the European Green Deal's targets and climate neutrality by 2050, in future, rail has to play a more significant role in passenger and freight transport. The railway's share in moving passengers and freight needs to increase significantly.

2. The EU's railway packages

Regarding EU rail transport policy, in the past 25 years, the European Commission's efforts have concentrated on improving the conditions in the rail transport market in order to strengthen the railway's competitiveness compared to other modes of transport. The three major areas of the Commission's efforts to improve the railways in the EU include the opening of the rail transport

market to competition, the improvement of the interoperability and safety of national networks and the development of railway infrastructure.

Between 2001 and 2016, four legislative railway packages were adopted with the aim of gradually opening up rail transport service markets for competition, making national railway systems interoperable and defining appropriate framework conditions for the development of a single European railway area. It includes charging and capacity allocation rules, common provisions on licensing of railway undertakings and train driver certification, safety requirements, the creation of the European Agency for railways and rail regulatory bodies in each EU Member State as well as rail passenger rights.

Finally, the year 2021 will be an important year for the EU rail policy as it is the first full year in which the rules agreed under the Fourth Railway Package will be fully implemented throughout the EU. These rules are designed to open up the domestic passenger services market and reduce costs and the administrative burden for railway undertakings operating across the EU. The rules should open the domestic passenger transport market and reduce the costs and administrative burden for railway companies operating across the EU

Most recently, there is a growing public interest in railways, including a revival of night trains services in a number of Member States. However, many obstacles remain to be removed until a true Single European Rail Area is achieved. Therefore, rail needs a further boost in order to become more attractive to travellers and businesses as a mean of transport that meets both, the people's daily and more long-distance mobility needs.

3. The European Year of Rail 2021

The possibility to declare 2021 "European Year of Railways" was discussed on 9 December 2019 with various invited rail sector representatives (CER, UNIFE, EIM, ERFA - Allrail), the European

Union Agency for Railways (ERA), Shift2Rail and Europalia representatives. All participants expressed broad support for this initiative, emphasising the role of rail in reaching the decarbonisation objective and stressing the cross-border dimension of rail.

On 4 March 2020, the European Commission issued the proposal on a European Year of Rail (2021), COM(2020) 78 final. The European Commission proposes the year 2021 as “European Year of Rail” in order to better promote rail transport in line with the objectives set out in the Commission Communication on the European Green Deal. The idea is to give more attention to this transport mode and to underline that railways can be the answer to many important mobility issues, in particular to the necessary introduction of measures to reduce GHG emissions.

On 24 June 2020, the Permanent Representatives Committee agreed on a negotiating mandate on the proposal, which aims to promote this green, safe and innovative mode of transport as a key element in the shift to sustainable and smart mobility. The objective of the European Year of Rail is 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.

The European Year should promote environmentally friendly and energy-efficient railways as a sustainable, innovative and safe mode of transport, that could play a more crucial role in helping the EU become climate neutral by 2050. Other objectives for the year include raising awareness of the cross-border European dimension of rail transport and increasing its contribution to the economy, industry and society in the EU. It should also highlight the European, cross-border dimension of rail as an important element of the relations within the EU and beyond to third countries, like the Western Balkans.

The European Year of Rail will therefore cover aspects relating to regional development,

industrial competitiveness, sustainable tourism, employment, innovation, education, youth and culture, while focusing on improving accessibility for disabled people and people with reduced mobility (DPRMs). The financial allocation for the European Year of Rail is estimated at €8 million, with the final sum being decided in accordance with the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027.

4. The European Year of Rail related initiatives and measures

Basically, the European Year of Rail will build on existing rail-related initiatives and policies such as opening the market of domestic passenger services. The European Year will be an opportunity to encourage Member States authorities and the sector to work together to promote rail transport. A wide range of events are planned throughout the year 2021, and the Year of the Railways should give the sector a boost and make more tourists, businesspeople and manufacturers choose the train as means of transport rather than passenger cars or aircraft. Similar to other European Years, measures will include information and promotion campaigns, events, projects and initiatives at EU, national, regional and local levels. The activities organised in the course of the European Year are tailored to meet the needs and circumstances of each Member State. The EU 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, will be set up. The Commission will 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. 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.

The coordination of the European Year at Union level should allow for the creation of synergies between the various Union programmes and initiatives that fund projects in the field of rail transport or that have a rail dimension. The Commission should also convene regular meetings of stakeholders and representatives of organisations or bodies active in the field of rail transport, including existing transnational networks and relevant NGOs, as well as of youth organisations and communities, to assist it in implementing the European Year at Union level.

5. The railway's role regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 crisis, which unfolded since the beginning of the year 2020 also in Europe, has hit the transport and tourism sectors exceptionally hard. In this context, the Council underlines that despite operational and financial constraints, the rail transport has maintained crucial connections both for the transport of people and of essential goods such as medical devices, food and fuel in exceptional circumstances.

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 for both, the facilitation of the supply of essential goods and for reaching wider transport policy objectives.

6. Additional targets for the Year of Rail

Following negotiations with the European Parliament, according to the Council of the European Union's outcome of proceedings, as endorsed by the Permanent Representatives Committee on 18 November 2020, some important

themes and considerations were added to the Year of Rail initiative. The Council added aspects such as the role of railways in end-to-end mobility, how to increase the capacity of railway infrastructure, and informing rail passengers of their rights and of the availability of through-ticketing.

The Council has tasked the Commission with launching two feasibility studies. Firstly, the Commission should consider initiating a study on developing a European "Green Rail" label for goods and products transported by rail. Such a label would also encourage businesses to switch their transport to rail. Secondly, 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, similar to the already existing index for air transport.

Moreover, the Council intends to include the aspect of promoting the key role of railways in international passenger transport within the Union into the objectives of the European Year of Rail. This also includes the promotion of an EU night train network and the creation of public awareness of the potential role of rail for European sustainable tourism, among others. Furthermore, the promotion of railways in sustainable end-to-end mobility, the connection of hubs and smart transfer between modes of transport should also be considered. The contribution 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; as well as topics like how to modernise rolling stock and how to further develop and increase the capacity of railway infrastructure in order to facilitate broader use of passenger and freight transport by rail should be considered. In passenger transport by railways this should include the offer of

through-tickets and development of innovative digital multi-modal tickets.

The European Commission is asked to inform the European Parliament and the Council of its plans during the European Year of Rail at the latest by 31 March 2021. By 31 December 2022, the Commission is tasked to 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 the Decision on the European Year of Rail.

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