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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Proposal for a DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on a European Year of Rail (2021) - Outcome of European Parliament's first reading (Brussels, 14-18 December 2020)

I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the provisions of Article 294 of the TFEU and the joint declaration on practical arrangements for the codecision procedure[1], a number of informal contacts have taken place between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission with a view to reaching an agreement on this file at first reading.

In this context, the chair Karima DELLI (Greens/EFA, FR), presented a compromise amendment (amendment 40) to the abovementioned proposal for a Decision on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism. This amendment had been agreed during the informal contacts referred to above. No other amendments were tabled.

[1] OJ C 145, 30.6.2007, p. 5.

II. VOTE

When it voted on 15 December 2020, the plenary adopted the compromise amendment (amendment 40) to the abovementioned proposal for a Decision. The Commission's proposal as thus amended constitutes the Parliament's first-reading position which is contained in its legislative resolution as set out in the Annex hereto[2].

The Parliament's position reflects what had been previously agreed between the institutions. The Council should therefore be in a position to approve the Parliament's position.

The act would then be adopted in the wording which corresponds to the Parliament's position.

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[2] The version of the Parliament's position in the legislative resolution has been marked up to indicate the changes made by the amendments to the Commission's proposal. Additions to the Commission's text are highlighted in ***bold and italics.*** The symbol " ▌ " indicates deleted text.

P9_TA(2020)0345

European Year of Rail (2021) ***I

European Parliament legislative resolution of 15 December 2020 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Rail (2021) (COM(2020)0078 – C9-0076/2020 – 2020/0035(COD))

(Ordinary legislative procedure: first reading)

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Commission proposal to Parliament and the Council (COM(2020)0078),

– having regard to Article 294(2) and Article 91 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pursuant to which the Commission submitted the proposal to Parliament (C9-0076/2020),

– having regard to Article 294(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

– having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 16 July 2020[3],

– having regard to the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of 14 October 2020[4],

– having regard to the provisional agreement approved by the committee responsible under Rule 74(4) of its Rules of Procedure and the undertaking given by the Council representative by letter of 18 November 2020 to approve Parliament's position, in accordance with Article 294(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

– having regard to Rule 59 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Regional Development and also the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism (A9-0191/2020),

[3] OJ C 364, 28.10.2020, p. 149.
[4] Not yet published in the Official Journal.

1. Adopts its position at first reading hereinafter set out;

2. Calls on the Commission to refer the matter to Parliament again if it replaces, substantially amends or intends to substantially amend its proposal;

3. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

P9_TC1-COD(2020)0035

Position of the European Parliament adopted at first reading on 15 December 2020 with a view to the adoption of Decision (EU) 2020/… 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 Committee[5],

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions[6],

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure[7],

Whereas:

[5] ***OJ C 364, 28.10.2020, p. 149***.
[6] ***Opinion of 14 October 2020 (not yet published in the Official Journal).***
[7] ***Position of the European Parliament of 15 December 2020.***

(1) In its Communication of 11 December 2019, entitled 'The European Green Deal' ("Communication on the European Green Deal"), the Commission set out a European Green Deal for the 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 2019, the European Council endorsed the objective of achieving a climate-neutral Union by 2050.

(3) In its resolution of 15 January 2020, the European Parliament welcomed the Communication on the European Green Deal and called for the necessary transition to a climate-neutral society by 2050.

(4) In line with the objectives set out in the 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. Transport accounts for a quarter of the Union's greenhouse gas emissions, ***a share that*** 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.***

(5) The European Green Deal implies accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility in order to address those challenges. In particular, a substantial part of the 75 % of inland freight carried today by road should be shifted onto rail and inland waterways. ***For that shift to take place, significant investments are needed, including investments made in the context of the recovery, and an essential part of them will relate to the implementation of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and efforts to increase the efficiency of the rail freight corridors.***

(***6***) 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 CO_2 than equivalent travel by road or air. It is the only ***transport*** mode that has consistently reduced its greenhouse gas emissions and CO_2 emissions since 1990. In addition, rail has decreased its energy consumption between 1990 and 2016 and increasingly uses renewable energy sources.

(7) ***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 railway area, established by Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council[8], is necessary both for facilitating the supply of essential goods, such as food, medicines and fuel, particularly in exceptional circumstances, and for achieving wider transport policy objectives.***

(***8***) By connecting the Union's main transport routes with its peripheral***, mountainous and remote*** regions and territories, ***including at regional and local level, and 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, in remote and rural areas, the networks that guarantee the provision of basic services to the population are often fewer in number and less well-developed. Peripheral regions are often faced with the doubly difficult situation of being rural in character and at the periphery of national networks.***

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8 ***Directive 2012/34/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012 establishing a single European railway area (OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 32).***

(***9***) 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 railway area***. The rail sector is sometimes hampered inter alia by outdated business and operational practices, by ageing infrastructure and rolling stock and by noisy wagons***. Overcoming those obstacles together with reducing costs***, studying Union schemes to supplement national mechanisms for non-discriminatory support for rail operators,*** and accelerating innovation will allow rail to realise its full potential***, while ensuring the functioning of the internal market, increasing rail 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.

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

(*11*) In order to promote rail transport in line with the objectives set out in the Communication on the European Green Deal, including with regard to sustainable and smart mobility, the year 2021 should be designated as the European Year of Rail ("the European Year"). The year 2021 will be important for the Union rail policy, since it will represent 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***,*** on reducing costs and administrative burden for railway undertakings operating across the Union ***and on providing the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) with additional tasks that aim to lower technical barriers.*** There is a growing public interest in railways, including in night trains, in a number of Member States, as 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 should contribute to a pan-European debate on the future of railways.***

(12) 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 procedure for 2021 in accordance with the 2021 to 2027 multiannual financial framework. 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.

(13) 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 low ecological impact and social and economic cohesion.

(14) During the European Year, the Commission should consider initiating 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. Likewise, the Commission should consider initiating a feasibility study with a view to introducing a rail connectivity index, with the aim of categorising the level of integration achieved through the use of services on the rail network.

(15) The role of motivated staff cannot be overestimated, since they guarantee the smooth running of operations. In order to reach its full potential, the rail sector needs to diversify its workforce and, in particular, to attract women and young workers. That policy should be promoted at all institutional levels.

(16) Enhancing the attractiveness of rail requires services to be user-centred and to be organised and designed in a way that delivers good value, consistent dependability, excellent quality of service and attractive pricing.

(17) Since the objectives of this Decision, namely to promote rail transport as a sustainable, innovative, interconnected and intermodal, safe and affordable mode of transport and as an important element in maintaining and developing good relations between the Union and its neighbouring countries, as well as to highlight the European, cross-border dimension of rail and to enhance the contribution of rail to the Union economy, industry and society, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States but can rather, by reason of the need for transnational exchange of information and Union-wide dissemination of best practices, be better achieved at Union level, the Union may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union. 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’ (“the European Year”).

Article 2

Objectives

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

(a) 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 Union’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, ***inter alia presenting rail as an attractive career opportunity*****;**

(b) to 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 integrating the Union internal market***, in particular by ensuring better connectivity within and with its geographical periphery, including through regional cross-border connections***;

(c) to enhance the contribution of rail to the Union's economy, to its industry***, including to its global competitiveness, to its commerce*** and to its society, ▌ in particular those aspects related to regional ***and local*** development, ▌ sustainable tourism, ▌ education, youth and culture, and to improving accessibility for persons with disabilities ***or persons with reduced mobility, and in particular paying attention to the needs of elderly people***;

(d) to contribute to promoting rail as an important element in relations between the Union and ***its neighbouring countries***, building on interests and needs in partner countries and on ▌ expertise in rail transport, ***both within and beyond the Union;***

(e) to build on rail's power to stimulate the collective imagination, particularly through rail's history and its cultural heritage, recalling the contribution that rail has made to the creation of European prosperity and the role of the rail in developing cutting-edge technologies;

(f) to promote the attractiveness of the railway professions, in particular by highlighting the demand for new skills and the importance of fair and safe working conditions and of addressing the need to increase diversity in the workforce;

(g) to promote the key role of railways in international passenger transport within the Union;

(h) to promote a Union night train network and encourage initiatives that underline its cross-border nature by using symbols that represent the Union;

(i) to create public awareness of rail's potential role in the development of sustainable tourism in Europe;

(j) to promote the key role of railways in sustainable end-to-end mobility, connecting hubs and allowing attractive and smart transfer between modes of transport;

(***k) to contribute to the implementation of the Fourth Railway Package and to raising awareness of the measures required to establish the single European railway area, based on a well-functioning TEN-T;***

(l) to 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, underlining in this context the importance of the cooperation among infrastructure managers, research and innovation and the role of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking established by Council Regulation (EU) No 642/2014[9];

(m) to 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, as well as to provide information about current challenges in that respect, such as the need for data sharing among actors.

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[9] Council Regulation (EU) No 642/2014 of 16 June 2014 establishing the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking (OJ L 177, 17.6.2014, p. 9).

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. Those measures 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 the engagement of citizens, businesses and public authorities ***in order to increase trust 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 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***;

(b) initiatives in Members States to encourage, in both the public and private sector, business-travel and commuting patterns by rail;

(***c***) informative exhibitions, inspirational, educational and awareness-raising campaigns, ***as well as the use of demonstration and information trains*** to encourage changes in passenger, consumer and business behaviour and to stimulate the general public to actively contribute to achieving the objectives of more sustainable transport;

(***d***) sharing the experience and best practices of national, regional and local authorities, civil society, businesses and schools as regards promoting the use of rail and on how to implement behavioural change at all levels;

(***e***) undertaking studies and innovative activities, and disseminating their results on a European or national scale; ▌

(***f***) promoting projects and networks related to the European Year, including via the media, social networks and other online communities;

(g) partnerships and events such as those set out in the Annex;

(h) identifying and promoting best practices to create a level-playing field for different modes of transport;

(i) promoting projects and activities to raise awareness of sustainable end-to-end mobility that delivers seamless "door-to-door" travel solutions in combination with other modes of transport, including active travel, and sustainable and smart logistics;

(j) promoting projects and activities fostering awareness of the importance of the single European railway area, in particular as regards its on-going implementation, actions facilitating international railway journeys and actions for digital passenger information, such as those providing real-time information about journey offers, fares and timetables, including from independent providers, facilitating comparison; and

(k) promoting projects and activities 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.

2. ***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 feasibility study with a view to introducing a rail connectivity index, with the aim of categorising the level of integration achieved through the use of services on the rail network and showing the potential of rail to compete with other modes of transport.***

By 31 March 2021, the Commission shall inform the European Parliament and the Council of its plans.

3. The Union institutions and bodies, as well as 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 Member States. ***They*** shall ensure the coordination of relevant activities at national level ***and shall 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 Union and national level. Representatives of the European Parliament may participate in those meetings as observers.

2. The coordination of the European Year at Union level shall be transversal in 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 non-governmental organisations, ***universities and technology centres***, as well as ***representatives*** of youth organisations and communities***, organisations representing persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility***, to assist it in implementing the European Year at Union level.

4. The Commission may, if the budget allows, 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, the Commission shall, where necessary, 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, to the Council, to the European Economic and Social Committee and to 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 key performance indicators shall be set out in that report. For the purpose of that report, Member States shall provide information to the Commission on the activities for which they have been responsible.***

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*.

Done at …,

For the European Parliament	*For the Council*
The President	*The President*

ANNEX

Partnerships and events

This Annex sets out the following indicative list of partnerships and events linked to the European Year:

(1) partnerships with film festivals throughout Europe to highlight the prominent place of rail in cinema production;

(2) cooperation with European railway museums and existing cultural events such as film festivals and art exhibitions;

(3) partnerships with ERA to emphasise:

(a) the performance of the rail sector in Europe,

(b) the know-how of actors in the rail sector, in particular of rail workers,

(c) the advantages of rail in terms of safety and environmental protection, and

(d) career opportunities in the rail sector for pupils, students and apprentices;

(4) 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;

(5) provision of Inter-rail passes for young people in connection with Erasmus studies or competitions to extend the reach of the European Year;

(6) the use of stations as places of art, urban meeting places and economic, cultural and civic hub, and the use of railway museums to relay the messages of the European Year.