

Decision (EU) 2020/2228 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 December 2020 on a European Year of Rail (2021)

DECISION (EU) 2020/2228 OF THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

of 23 December 2020

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⁽¹⁾,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions⁽²⁾,

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure⁽³⁾,

Whereas:

- (1) In its communication of 11 December 2019, entitled ‘The European Green Deal’ (the ‘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.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Decision (EU) 2020/2228 of the European Parliament and of the Council. (See end of Document for details)

- (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 CO₂ than equivalent travel by road or air. It 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 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⁽⁴⁾, 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.
- (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

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Decision (EU) 2020/2228 of the European Parliament and of the Council. (See end of Document for details)

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.

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Decision (EU) 2020/2228 of the European Parliament and of the Council. (See end of Document for details)

- (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 to:

- (a) 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) 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) 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

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Decision (EU) 2020/2228 of the European Parliament and of the Council. (See end of Document for details)

- 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) 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) 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) 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) promote the key role of railways in international passenger transport within the Union;
 - (h) promote a Union night train network and encourage initiatives that underline its cross-border nature by using symbols that represent the Union;
 - (i) create public awareness of rail's potential role in the development of sustainable tourism in Europe;
 - (j) 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) 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) 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 that 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⁽⁵⁾;
 - (m) 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.

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