

# European Year of Rail 2021 – informal agreement with the European Parliament



Rail travel is green, comfortable and safe – and it will play a key role in the EU's efforts to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Negotiators from the Council and the European Parliament today reached a **provisional agreement on designating 2021 as the European Year of Rail**. Throughout the year there will be a range of events and other initiatives designed to increase the proportion of people and goods travelling by rail, in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal.

Rail is the answer to many critical issues in the area of mobility, such as climate neutrality, energy efficiency, crisis resilience and safety. The Year of Rail aims to give a boost to the sector and to encourage more tourists, business people and manufacturers to choose the train.

*Andreas Scheuer, German Federal Minister for Transport and Digital Infrastructure, President of the Council*

The Year of Rail will promote railways as a sustainable, innovative and safe mode of transport, which is capable of guaranteeing essential services even during unexpected crises. This has been shown by the strategic role played by rail in maintaining crucial connections during the COVID-19 pandemic, for the transport both of people and of essential goods.

Other objectives for the year will include raising awareness of the cross-border European dimension of rail transport and increasing its contribution to the EU's economy, industry and society.

The Commission will be asked to consider launching two feasibility studies. One will be on the creation of a European label to promote goods transported by rail, and the other will explore the idea of a rail connectivity index, similar to the one that already exists for air transport. The Commission is required to inform the Council and the European Parliament of its plans by the end of March 2021.

The provisional agreement reached today is **subject to approval by the Council**. The presidency intends to submit the agreement for endorsement by the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) next week.

## **Background**

Transport accounts for a quarter of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions, and emissions from transport are still growing. To achieve the goal of climate neutrality by 2050 – as set out in the European Green Deal and endorsed by

the European Council – transport emissions must go down by 90%.

Rail emits far less CO<sub>2</sub> than equivalent travel by road or air, and it is the only mode of transport that has consistently reduced its greenhouse gas emissions since 1990.

At present, 75% of inland freight is carried by road.

Regarding EU rail transport policy, 2021 will be the first full year when the rules agreed under the Fourth Railway Package will be 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.