



## The journey begins – 2021 is the European Year of Rail!

Brussels, 30 December 2020

Friday, 1 January 2021, marks the beginning of the European Year of Rail. The European Commission initiative will highlight the benefits of rail as a sustainable, smart and safe means of transport. A variety of activities will put rail in the spotlight throughout 2021 across the continent, to encourage the use of rail by both citizens and businesses and to contribute to the EU Green Deal goal of becoming climate-neutral by 2050.

Adina **Vălean**, European Commissioner for Transport, said: *"Our future mobility needs to be sustainable, safe, comfortable and affordable. Rail offers all of that and much more! The European Year of Rail gives us the opportunity to re-discover this mode of transport. Through a variety of actions, we will use this occasion to help rail realise its full potential. I invite all of you to be part of the European Year of Rail."*

### The future is rail

In the EU, rail is responsible for less than 0.5% of transport-related greenhouse gas emissions. This makes it one of the most sustainable forms of passenger and freight transport. Among other benefits, rail is also exceptionally safe and it connects people and businesses across the EU via the [Trans-European Transport network](#) (TEN-T).

Despite these advantages, only about 7% of passengers and 11% of goods travel by rail. The European Year of Rail will create momentum to help increase rail's share of passenger and freight transport. This will cut the greenhouse gas emissions and pollution coming from EU transport significantly, making a huge contribution to the EU's efforts under the [European Green Deal](#).

As the first year of full implementation for the [4th railway package](#), 2021 will also represent an important leap towards the Single European Railway Area: a more efficient European rail network with seamless mobility across borders.

### All eyes on rail in 2021

On 1 January, the European Commission will launch a [website](#) providing further information on the initiative, as well as an overview of planned activities. Various events, projects and activities across the EU will highlight the many dimensions of rail – from Europe's world-leading, innovative rail industry, to rail's role in European culture and heritage, its importance for connecting regions, people and businesses, its part in sustainable tourism, as well as its involvement in the EU's relations with neighbouring countries, for example.

The Commission's legislative agenda will also reflect the European Year of Rail, with proposals on a new rail industrial partnership, better links for rail with other modes of transport, and making freight transport more sustainable overall, as outlined in the Commission's recently adopted [Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#).

### Background

The initiative, proposed by the European Commission in March and [adopted by the European Parliament](#) and the [Council](#) in December 2020, is part of the EU's efforts under the European Green Deal, the EU's plan to make its economy sustainable by achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

One of the key elements of the plan is to roll out cleaner and healthier means of transport, as the transport sector is currently responsible for about 25% of the Union's greenhouse gas emissions. The European Green Deal seeks a 90% reduction in transport emissions by 2050.

In order to meet this goal and to ensure that transport continues to play its part during the transition towards a clean, digital and innovative EU economy, the Commission adopted its Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy in December 2020. It outlines the path towards more sustainable, smart and resilient mobility, and includes milestones, such as doubling rail freight and tripling high-speed rail activity by 2050. The Commission will present an action plan to boost passenger rail transport next year, and the strategy foresees measures to improve capacity and to simplify ticketing across

different transport modes to further increase the attractiveness of rail.

**For More Information**

[European Year of Rail 2021](#)

[Final Text of the Decision](#)

[Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#)

[European Green Deal](#)

[Completion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Railway Package: harmonised procedures across the whole EU](#)

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