

JOINT STATEMENT of the rail sector

on the

forthcoming Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility

Executive Summary

The present Statement has been jointly prepared by the Community of European railways and infrastructure companies (CER), the association of the European rail infrastructure managers (EIM) and the association of the European rail supply industry (UNIFE). In the context of the COVID-19 sanitary crisis, through this common statement, the three associations wish:

- to present their views, expectations and priorities for DG MOVE’s forthcoming “sustainable and smart mobility” strategy;
- to outline the assets rail transport can bring to the European Green Deal;
- to comment on the continued value of the 2011-Transport White Paper.

European Green Deal and the role of rail	The decarbonisation of transport is paramount to achieve the European Green Deal’s climate-neutrality objective. Therefore, massive investments must be channelled into the green transition of EU economy and transportation system.
The 2011 Transport White Paper	The White Paper identified the main shortcomings of mobility in the EU, still largely present nowadays. It proposed an ambitious, far-reaching approach to overcome them.
The way forward: a “Sustainable and Smart Mobility” strategy	The forthcoming strategy’s EU-wide scope is essential to creating a frictionless Single European Transport Area. To realise the European Green Deal, rail must truly become the backbone of tomorrow’s green, multimodal transport. The modal shift principle should therefore be at the heart of the strategy.
Conclusion The Covid-19 crisis and the future of transport	Rail and urban rail systems have continued to deliver vital services throughout the COVID-19 crisis. This underlines the importance of rail transport to society. Building on the Green Deal’s sustainable growth goals, the transition to climate-neutrality should be at the centre of the revised EU budget for 2021-2027 ¹ and the EU recovery plan.

¹ The Commission proposal maintains the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and goes in the right direction by increasing its general transport portion by €1.5 billion to fund “high-performance transport infrastructure to facilitate cross-border connections”.

Introduction

The European Union is at crossroads when it comes to choosing its future economic and social model. In particular, climate change is one of the most pressing issues to solve. It requires not only a different political mindset, but also concrete steps to enable businesses, industries and citizens to drive forward a transformation process towards production and consumption based on sustainability and resource efficiency.

The European Commission has presented the European Green Deal² (*hereinafter: EGD*) as the hallmark of its mandate. The ambition of the EGD is to affirm Europe as the global leader in the transition to a net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions economy, by reaching full climate neutrality by 2050³. All sectors and industries have a part to play in this transition by massively reducing their carbon footprint, and will be subject to different measures aimed at reaching this target and supporting Europe's overarching sustainability goals.

Transport will be the focus of specific initiatives in the framework of the EGD. On 29 January 2020 the European Commission's new work programme announced a "strategy for sustainable and smart mobility" (*hereinafter: the strategy*). According to the work programme, the strategy should be adopted in the fourth quarter of 2020⁴. The strategy will need unprecedented ambition to achieve the EGD goal of 90% reduction in transport emissions by 2050.

Simultaneously, the European Commission's DG MOVE is undertaking the review of the 2011-Transport White Paper "Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system"⁵. The outcome of this assessment is likely to constitute an essential basis for the preparation of the new comprehensive strategy.

Europe and the world have been hit harshly by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has put the economy and daily life to a grinding halt. The global health crisis has struck so the European Commission responded with a reviewed proposal for the EU's 2021-2027 budget (Multiannual Financial Framework – MFF). Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has stated that the budget will focus on the recovery phase from the COVID-19 and turn the pandemic into an opportunity to build a sustainable European economy and that the EGD will be "our motor for the recovery"⁶.

To this extent, on 23rd April 2020, EU governments endorsed the roadmap for recovery "*Towards a more resilient, sustainable and fair Europe*"⁷ (*hereinafter: Recovery Plan*). It highlights the EGD as a crucial enabler of economic recovery. European rail operators, rail infrastructure managers, and rail manufacturers and suppliers fully support the EGD's role for economic recovery.

² "The European Green Deal"; COM(2019) 640 final; https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf

³ Proposal for a Regulation "establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 (European Climate Law); COM(2020) 80 final; https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission-proposal-regulation-european-climate-law-march-2020_en.pdf

⁴ Commission Work Programme 2020 "A Union that strives for more"; COM(2020) 37 final; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar%3A7ae642ea-4340-11ea-b81b-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

⁵ "Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system"; COM/2011/0144 final; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0144&from=EN>

⁶ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/green-deal-will-be-our-motor-for-the-recovery-von-der-leyen-says/>

⁷ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/43384/roadmap-for-recovery-final-21-04-2020.pdf>

EGD and the role of Rail

- Mobility is a key element of the EGD because, without the decarbonisation of transport, the climate-neutrality ambitions cannot be accomplished. The transport sector accounts for nearly one-quarter of the overall GHG emissions in Europe and it is the only sector whose emissions have increased since 1990⁸.
- Within transport, rail stands out as the exception – it is the only mode of transport which has reduced its emissions, while increasing passenger and freight volumes and improving its energy efficiency. Moreover, Europe's rail sector has pledged to reduce total CO2 emissions for passenger and freight transport by 30% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels (and this notwithstanding the expected modal shift goals of the White Paper). According to data reported by the International Energy Agency (IEA), European railways are on track to meet this target, even outperforming them⁹.
- As the greenest mode of transport, rail is part of the solution to decarbonise transport, therefore enabling the fulfilment of the climate-neutrality ambition by 2050. We therefore fully support the EGD priority of shifting a substantial¹⁰ part of inland freight carried today by road onto rail and inland waterways. Rail is also resources efficient, being a low resource consumer and long life and resilient transport system.
- The three associations welcome the Political Statement¹¹ of June 4th, signed by 24 Member States and Switzerland on enhancing rail passenger transport and are committed to contribute to its implementation.
- CER, EIM and UNIFE support the notion in the Recovery Plan that the “green transition” is pivotal in relaunching and modernising the EU economy after the sanitary crisis. The EGD should be the motor of sustainable growth. We therefore endorse the call for massive investments into the European green transition, to be embedded in the national recovery and resilience plans.
- The three associations welcome the “open letter” signed by majority of EU member states, calling on the European Commission to support the EGD’s objectives with the Recovery Plan. The economic or social consequences of the pandemic must not weaken EU ambitions. The Commission should send an unambiguous signal to citizens and businesses that Europe will uphold its commitment towards reaching climate neutrality.

The 2011 Transport White Paper

- The 2011 Transport White Paper (*hereinafter: the White Paper*) has represented a unique, far-reaching, ambitious commitment, by the European Commission to devise the future of mobility in a comprehensive, inclusive, coordinated and harmonised way.
- The White Paper identified, back in 2011, a number of shortcomings of the EU transport system, notably the dependence on fossil fuels, the level of GHG emissions and air pollutants, the disproportionate share of road transport (passenger and freight) versus other modes, and

⁸ Transport is the 2nd most polluting sector after energy production. Transport GHG emissions, after a peak in 2007 followed by a 10% decrease for 2007-13, are increasing since 2013. Source: European Environmental Agency (EEA): <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/transport-emissions-of-greenhouse-gases/transport-emissions-of-greenhouse-gases-12>

⁹ https://uic.org/IMG/pdf/handbook_iea-uic_2017_web3.pdf.

¹⁰ i.e. 75%

¹¹ See for full text of the political statement: <https://www.permanentrepresentations.nl/permanent-representations/pr-eu-brussels/documents/publications/2020/06/04/political-statement-for-coalition-of-the-willing-development-international-rail-passenger-transport>

congestion. Those problems are, in considerable part, still present nowadays. This shows the accuracy and relevance of the White Paper and suggests a strong need to continue EU policy action to overcome and fix those issues in EU transport.

- Many of the White Paper's "Ten goals" directly relate to the rail sector. Some of those goals deal with infrastructure financing – i.e. the completion of a EU-wide multimodal core & comprehensive TEN-T Network (goal 5) – others with the total costs of transport to society – i.e. full implementation of 'user pays' and 'polluter pays' principles (goal 10) – and also with urban transport – i.e. phasing out the "conventionally-fuelled" cars in cities by 2050 (goal 1). The goals are all interlinked and consistent one with the other, all supporting collectively the shift to sustainable modes of transport like rail.
- While insufficient progress has been made in the last few years with respect to applying 'polluter-pays' principle or addressing transport emissions¹², the decarbonisation goal is a bigger challenge for society now than in 2011. A level playing field between the different transport modes has still not been reached.
- The continued relevance of the White Paper's goals is demonstrated by the fact that they have been required by the EGD in its objective to fully decarbonise transport. This is notably the case for freight transport, where a "substantial part" of road freight should be shifted to rail and inland waterways.
- The White Paper aimed to push European transport to become more sustainable and integrated. By setting an EU-wide policy framework for the whole mobility sector, all transport actors and modes were encouraged to reinvent themselves according to a cleaner, more modern paradigm.
- The new mobility paradigm set by the White Paper has triggered an effort for innovation and competitiveness across all modes, with regulatory initiatives aimed at further developing the transport single market as well as boosting climate and energy policy-related priorities. Examples are the Fourth Railway Package, the 2018 Communication "A clean planet for all", and the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking.

The way forward: a "Sustainable and Smart Mobility" strategy

- CER, EIM and UNIFE strongly support the ambition for a new strategy. A new focus on sustainable mobility – in line with the EGD – is necessary, especially at a time when the EU is reviewing its 2030 emission reduction targets and, as a result, is expected to update the Effort Sharing Regulation that encompasses transport.
- The creation of a seamless and frictionless single European transport area should be at the heart of the forthcoming strategy. An EU-wide focus remains, in this regard, essential as well as to achieving climate neutrality. The strategy should ensure that transport and climate policies across Europe are well aligned to common objectives and criteria.
- The principle of 'polluter pays' and 'modal shift' towards sustainable modes – set in a newer digital and multimodal context – should stay at the heart of the new strategy. The modal shift remains essential to make EU transport greener and climate-neutral by 2050.¹³ The EGD's call for

¹² Please see in this regard also the DG MOVE study 'Sustainable Transport Infrastructure Charging and Internalisation of Transport Externalities' from (June 2019): https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/sustainable/internalisation-transport-external-costs_en

¹³ A study from Dutch infrastructure manager ProRail (December 2019) shows that a modal shift from air to rail can potentially save up to 2 to 8 million tonnes of CO₂ on a yearly basis: https://www.prorail.nl/sites/default/files/onderzoek_co2_reductie_in_europa_bij_betere_benutting_van_het_europese_spoor.pdf (study is in English)

accelerating the shift from road to rail is reconfirmed in the Commission proposal to make 2021 to be the European Year for Rail¹⁴.

- The European commission agenda on sustainable finance should also support the Strategy, provided that the Taxonomy Regulation makes clear that only zero-emission vehicles – all modes considered – and their related infrastructure are considered sustainable.
- Rail pledges to play an ever-more important role in the context of the forthcoming strategy. The cleanest mode of transport already, rail is working hard to reduce even further its environmental footprint, streamline its resources management (i.e. through circular economy) and contribute to massive GHG, PM (particulate matters) and NOx emission reductions through electrification, new clean technologies¹⁵ and modal shift.
 - With regard to energy efficiency the rail sector is constantly improving to reduce its energy consumption¹⁶. This is done through for example:
 - On-board energy meters that enable that RUs get invoiced for their real consumption and will therefore get a return on investment on energy saving investments.
 - Training programs that help to decrease the energy consumption for running and stabled trains.
 - Enabling automatic train operation so that trains always optimise their energy consumption.
 - Rolling stock also becomes more and more energy efficient. This is not only limited to LED lightening or more efficient cooling and heating systems, but also done by decreasing the weight by seat (e.g. by using double decker vehicles). Aim is to reduce the specific energy consumption and CO2 emissions.
 - Some Infrastructure Managers have created specific 'Energy Efficiency Centres' which regroup a large variety of stakeholders that jointly work together to implement energy-efficient and at the same time pro-ecological solutions serving all participants of the railway market.
 - Rail is already the most carbon-efficient motorised way of transport: rail accounts for less than 0.5% of GHG emissions from transport although it carries 17% of inland freight and 8% of passengers in Europe¹⁷. Rail's success in reducing GHG emissions relies on the following:
 - Rail is modernising and digitalising its infrastructure: Rail infrastructure in Europe is already largely electrified¹⁸.
 - Rail is modernising and digitalising its fleet: Railway undertakings are continuously investing in energy-efficient modern rolling stock¹⁹. New trains are procured and the existing fleet is modernised through reconditioning of technical components.

¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_364

¹⁵ Such as battery vehicles and fuel cells or alternative propulsion systems for railway vehicles.

¹⁶ As the transport sector accounts for nearly 30% of global final energy consumption, in the decade between 2005 and 2015, rail energy consumption per passenger/km decreased by 27.8% and energy consumption per freight tonne/km decreased by 18.1%.. (Source: International Energy Agency; https://uic.org/IMG/pdf/handbook_iaa-uic_2017_web3.pdf)

¹⁷ EU Transport statistical pocket book 2019; https://ec.europa.eu/transport/facts-fundings/statistics/pocketbook-2019_en

¹⁸ Switzerland's railway lines are 100% electrified, while Luxembourg (95%), Belgium (86%), the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Austria, Bulgaria, Spain, Poland and Portugal are all above 60%.

¹⁹ Due to electrification of the railway network, diesel vehicles are gradually replaced with electric vehicles and deliver zero direct emissions in rail. Alternative drives such as hydrogen and electric hybrid battery drive trains are also being deployed for the areas where electrification is not economically feasible.




- Rail increasingly procures green electricity and rail companies are committed to gradually eliminate the use of fossil fuel energy between 2040 and 2050²⁰. Renewable energy sources are carefully assessed by railways in various projects.
- While power purchase agreements are signed railways also strive towards own generation by installing wind power and photovoltaics on the roofs of buildings and stations.
- Each moving train corresponds to several dozen cars and trucks and this helps avoid GHG, dust (PM) and NOx emissions. Since rail users demand fast, punctual and well-connected transport, various investments are performed by rail infrastructure managers. Railway capacity has grown through the construction of *additional* kilometres of track. But railway infrastructure managers have also managed to increase capacity of *existing* tracks over the years through improved traffic management and through optimisation of maintenance of infrastructure via digitalisation. The implementation of ERTMS will support these developments even more. Therefore, investments both in additional track kilometres and innovative solutions remains thus crucial.
- The strategy should acknowledge certain trends which, during the last decade, have come to play a significant role in the transport sector. The importance of research & innovation (R&I), digitalisation and multimodality has risen in shaping a different economic, social and technological landscape for mobility.
 - R&I is a powerful enabler of technological progress and economic growth. Through the activities of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking, the whole rail sector has worked towards a more digital integrated and cleaner transport system – especially in crucial areas such as energy efficiency. ‘Sustainable’ and ‘Smart’ mobility are at the heart of collaborative research in rail, therefore the strategy should support the continuation of Shift2Rail within Horizon Europe 2021-2027, with a strong budget.
 - Digitalisation has fostered new business models and services in all transport modes, including rail. The strategy should set the pathway for a regulatory framework which enables faster uptake of digital technologies – such as Artificial Intelligence or Gigabit connectivity – in rail transport, enabling efficiencies in the operation and maintenance of all rail-related assets
 - Multimodality is key to reduce mobility’s environmental footprint while making it more accessible and attractive for passenger & freight customers. Rail, the cleanest mode of transport, with its strong R&I base and potential in digital technologies, should be enabled to become the system integrator of a seamless mobility chain.
- CER, EIM and UNIFE very much welcome the proposal by the European Commission to make 2021 “the European Year of Rail”²¹. It will be the ideal framework to start implementing the strategy, working towards the EGD goals as well as promoting an attractive and sustainable way to connect people and businesses.

²⁰ For example since 2018 electric traction is from renewable energies in Austria, in the Netherlands electric trains are already running 100% on wind energy, Sweden 100% and in Switzerland 90% on hydropower.

²¹ Proposal for a Decision on “a European Year of Rail (2021)”²¹; COM(2020) 78 final;
<https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/legislation/com20200078.pdf>

Conclusion: The Covid-19 crisis and the future of transport

- Despite the global health crisis provoked by Covid-19, moving people and goods remains an imperative, not a choice. International supply chains must continue to move goods as seamlessly as possible to keep Europe's economy going.
- During the crisis, rail and urban rail systems (trams/metros/urban rail) have continued to ensure the circulation of goods and passenger working in essential jobs. This has been made possible also thanks to major EU investments in rail projects over the past years – through CEF and ESI funding instruments – modernising the European infrastructure, eliminating the bottlenecks and bridging the missing links.
- The strategic role played by rail during the Covid-19 crisis and its role as the greenest and safest mode of mass transportation have shown the importance of strengthening the future transport systems with rail as its backbone.
- CER, EIM and UNIFE underline the need for the EU and its Member States to mobilise both ambitious EU and national financial envelopes to relaunch Europe's economy while achieving the key climate objectives set by the Commission in its EGD. We believe that the transition towards climate neutrality and resource-efficiency must be at the centre of the revised Commission's MFF proposal and the Roadmap for Recovery.
- The forthcoming strategy within the EGD should help support the European economic and social upturn – in the context of the post Covid-19 Roadmap for Recovery – within a long-term outlook based on climate neutrality, resource efficiency and circularity.
- CER, EIM and UNIFE reaffirm their readiness to work together with the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States to ensure that the rail sector contributes to the recovery of the EU economy and the wellbeing of European citizens.

For more information:	
<p>Ethem Pekin Senior Environmental Economist E: Ethem.Pekin@cer.be T: +32 2 213 08 40</p> 	<p>The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together more than 70 railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 73% of the rail network length, 83% of the rail freight business and about 95% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policy makers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow @CER_railways on Twitter.</p>
<p>Guus De Bruijn EU Legal & Policy Expert: Marina.Potapidou@eimrail.org T: +32 2 234 37 71</p> 	<p>EIM, the association of European Rail Infrastructure Managers, was established in 2002 to promote the interests and views of independent infrastructure managers in Europe, following the liberalisation of the EU railway market. It also provides technical expertise to the appropriate European bodies such as the European Railway Agency. EIM's primary goal is promoting growth of rail traffic and the development of an open sustainable, efficient, customer orientated rail network in Europe. For more information, visit www.eimrail.org or follow us on Twitter @EIMrail.</p>
<p>Tommaso Spanevello Public Affairs Manager E: Tommaso.Spanevello@unife.org T: +32 2 642 23 29</p> 	<p>UNIFE represents the European Rail Industry in Brussels since 1992. The Association gathers around 100 of Europe's leading large and medium-sized rail supply companies active in the design, manufacture, maintenance and refurbishment of rail transport systems, subsystems and related equipment. UNIFE also brings together 14 national rail industry associations of European countries. UNIFE members have an 84% market share in Europe and supply 46% of the worldwide production of rail equipment and services. For more information, visit www.unife.org or follow @unife on Twitter.</p>

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