

European Year of Rail 2021 – make rail more attractive, convenient and accessible to passengers

To: EU Commissioner for Transport, Adina Vălean

Dear Commissioner Vălean,

Train travel should be the affordable, environmentally-friendly and sustainable transport of the future. All European citizens should be able to get on board towards this future!

We warmly welcome the European Commission's proposal to declare 2021 the 'European Year of Rail' to achieve the goals set under the European Green Deal and the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

The European Year of Rail aims to promote train travel as an attractive, safe and sustainable way to move across Europe by reaching out to citizens through dedicated events and communication campaigns. It is essential that the Year of Rail goes beyond a simple awareness-raising campaign and has a strong focus on passengers to promote, inform, and raise awareness on their rights and how to enforce them.

The ongoing reform of the Rail Passenger Rights Regulation is a first opportunity to send a strong message to passengers to shift to train by giving them strong and easily enforceable rights. Therefore, we encourage the Commission to do its utmost to ensure that the ongoing negotiations strengthen rights of **all** rail passengers and not reduce them.

The Year of Rail proposal is also a chance to address existing issues that hinder many citizens from exercising their right to spontaneous and independent mobility. This could be achieved by encouraging the sharing of a minimum set of essential static and dynamic data between ticket vendors. Thus, passengers would benefit from a broader choice of services and essential travel information before, during and after their journeys irrespective of where they bought their tickets. Furthermore, the European Commission should explore the introduction of an integrated EU-wide ticketing and payment system, whereby a consumer could book a connected journey involving different operators via a single accessible platform. Such initiatives are essential for removing existing obstacles that prevent sustainable transport from being a truly convenient choice for all EU citizens.

Special attention and support must be given to the rights and wishes of passengers if train travel is to realise its potential contribution in the context of sustainable economic recovery in the post Covid-19 era. Identifying ways to help overcome people's natural wariness in the wake of Covid-19 is essential to attract them to make use of it.

Importantly, the Year of Rail must consider the vast demographic diversity of passengers in the EU, including passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility, younger and older passengers, and those living in rural and peripheral regions to ensure the accessibility and coverage of services throughout the EU. Initiatives under the Year of Rail must ensure that no one is left behind.

We hope the European Union and Member States will take this opportunity to further mainstream the accessibility of train transport and advance passenger rights. We also emphasise the need to ensure that the planning activities for the European Year of Rail proactively involve organisations representing passengers and that all campaigns, programmes, projects, and initiatives within the European Year of Rail are accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities, at Union and Member State-level, and in cooperative actions with third countries. We look forward to working with the European Commission on the implementation of the European Year of Rail at EU-level and with Member States through our national networks.

Signatories

European Passengers' Federation



BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation



European Disability Forum



AGE Platform Europe

