

Press Release - ERFA welcomes the designation of 2021 as the European Year of Rail

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ERFA welcomes the final adoption of 2021 as the European Year of Rail during the European Parliament Plenary Session today. The European Year of Rail should serve as the moment to highlight the benefits of rail, but also to openly discuss how the sector can further contribute to Europe's economic and climate related goals. The European Year of Rail will be a unique occasion to finally deliver a legal framework that meets the needs of rail freight.

The decision was adopted with 684 votes in favour (9 against, 2 abstentions). The European Year of Rail will support the European Commission's "Climate Law" which proposes setting a binding target of reaching net-zero carbon by 2050. It is impossible to achieve this objective if freight transport emissions are not addressed. [10% of all European Union Greenhouse Gas emissions](#) currently come from road freight. Although road freight will continue to play an invaluable role in supply chains, rail freight must improve its modal share in order for the European Union to significantly reduce freight transport emissions.

For this to be achieved, rail freight needs to become more attractive to end users. A transition is required from discussing the merits of rail to discussing how products and goods can be successfully moved to rail. The recent COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent freeing up of infrastructure capacity due to low demand for rail passenger transport, has shown that when rail freight has access to a good quantity and quality of capacity, it can provide a reliable and customer orientated service. This lesson needs to be carried into the Year of Rail and upcoming legislation.

The Year of Rail must also reflect the diverse makeup of the European rail freight industry. Non-incumbent operators account for, on average, 31% of European rail freight national markets. These operators have played a crucial part in keeping European supply chains open during the COVID-19 pandemic and will play an essential role in growing rail freight.

The proposal to develop a European "Green Label" for goods and products is most welcome as it will introduce further transparency to businesses on how their goods are transported.

Dirk Stahl, ERFA President, commented: "Over the past year, rail freight has proven its strategic importance by ensuring European economies and supply chains remained connected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Holding the European Year of Rail in 2021 is therefore most appropriate. We look forward to working together to ensure the European Year of Rail is a success".

Conor Feighan, ERFA Secretary General, stated: "The European Year of Rail is well timed given that 2021 will be an important moment for the future of rail freight. 2021 will see the tabling of some key legal texts, such as the revision of the Rail Freight Corridors and TEN-T

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Regulations, which will play a pivotal role in determining whether rail freight can reach its true potential”.

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