

EU Climate Law proposal and 2021 European Year of Rail initiative: both useful to Combined Transport

Last week the European Commission unveiled two proposals – both of which promise to advance the cause of Combined Transport:

- The proposal for a European Climate Law¹, and
- A proposal to designate 2021 a European Year of Rail².

UIRR welcomes the initiatives and encourages both the European Parliament and the governments of the Member States in the European Council to enact both.

The European Climate Law defines the European Union's carbon-neutrality roadmap through spelling out an intermediate CO₂ emission target to be achieved by 2030 and declaring a legally binding target of net zero greenhouse gas emission by 2050. The law also creates a system for monitoring progress and to take further action if needed, through which it aims to provide predictability on intentions for investors and other economic actors. The European Union will ensure the irreversibility of its transition to climate neutrality through this legislation. It's a first step.

- ➔ Combined Transport is the technique by which very low emission electric rail, as well as waterborne modes can be most efficiently inserted into longer distance freight transport chains. Subsequently, it will have to play a major role to achieve the climate neutrality of surface freight transport in the European Union.

The European Parliament and the Council were invited at the same time to designate 2021 a European Year of Rail – in recognition of the increased role (electric) railways need to play in the dramatic reduction of transport's greenhouse gas emissions. The initiative aims to promote rail transport as a sustainable, innovative and safe mode of transport to the wider public by emphasizing its role and potential in delivering the common European climate and transport policy objectives. Consumers and businesses should be targeted to stimulate their increased use of rail freight services. A series of events, campaigns and initiatives in 2021 will specifically promote rail as a sustainable mode of transport³.

- ➔ While overall rail freight performance has stagnated over the decade that passed since the end of the economic crisis, intermodal rail performance of UIRR members has doubled over the same period. In parallel with the decrease of classic bulk cargo carried by conventional rail freight, Combined Transport delivered among others increasing volumes of diverse, low density cargo to freight trains, which have previously been carried in trucks.

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Ralf-Charley Schultze

"The European Combined Transport sector, UIRR as its European industry association and the national intermodal associations active within the Member States equally welcome both Commission proposals unveiled last week. The Climate Law and the designation of 2021 as the European Year of Rail will carry our continent towards a better, more liveable, sustainable future." - commented UIRR President Ralf-Charley Schultze.

Who is UIRR?

Founded in 1970, the **International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport (UIRR)** represents the interests of European road-rail Combined Transport Operators and Transshipment Terminal Managers.

Road-Rail Combined Transport (CT) is a system of freight forwarding which is based on efficiently and economically inserting electric rail into long-distance (road) transport-chains through the use of intermodal loading units (ILU).

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/law_en

² <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/legislation/com20200078.pdf>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_364