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**UIC, the worldwide railway organisation, welcomes the announcement of the European Commission celebrating 2021 as the “European Year of Rail”**

***In 2021, UIC will start the celebration of its centenary by a series of events highlighting the strong assets and challenges that railways own and have ahead: among them, to promote rail as a sustainable, innovative & safe mode of transport***

(Paris, 10 March 2020) UIC, the worldwide railway organisation, welcomes the recent announcement made by Mrs Ursula von der Leyen celebrating 2021 as the “European Year of Rail”. This EU initiative will allow all the actors of the sector to demonstrate the advantages of rail.

### ***Railway has a central role to play in decarbonising transport***

While representing 8% of global passenger and freight transport activity (in pkm/tkm), railway represents 2% of the transport sector emissions and is therefore a particularly efficient and sustainable mode of transport. **The rail and public transport networks benefit from a decisive advantage linked to be frugal, which is a cardinal virtue for tackling climate change issues:**

- Frugality in energy consumption: whether you think in terms of energy per capita or globally, railway and public transport are extremely efficient: passenger rail transport requires less than 1/10th of the energy needed to move an individual by car or by aeroplane;
- Frugality in public space: whether in urban or rural area, the occupation of public space is minimal, and the promotion of public transport will once again give citizens the possibility to enjoy more public space with less noise, pollution and a greater level of safety;
- Frugality in terms of life cycle: the lifetime of railways as well as trams, can be up to 30 years, minimising the need to reinvest regularly in non-renewable resources;
- Frugality because those systems are scalable: it is possible to upgrade the level of service in changing only part(s) of the system without relying on complete system changes.

### ***Railways still continue to improve every day***

In 2014 UIC launched the “Low Carbon Rail Transport Challenge” regarding energy efficiency, CO2 emissions and modal shift, and in 2015 a pledge, in order to position railways as a solution to climate change and frame discussions with the United Nations and national governments.

The challenge was designed to illustrate how increased investments and modal shift to railways can help to secure the climate change below the two degrees scenario.

The low carbon railway transport challenge includes three sets of voluntary objectives:

- To improve rail efficiency;
- To decarbonise electricity supply;
- To achieve a more sustainable balance of transport modes.

These commitments are supported by a set of targets at global level, two of them being:

- To achieve a 50% reduction in CO2 emissions, per passenger-km and tonne-km, by 2030; and 75% reduction by 2050, relative to a 1990 baseline.

- To increase rail passenger market share by 50% in 2030 and then doubling in 2050.

Over the past 18 months, UIC together with a coalition of European Rail Freight companies, led an initiative called Rail Freight Forward, the aim of which is to drastically reduce the negative impact of freight transport through innovation and a more intelligent transport mix. This coalition aims to double the modal share of rail freight to 30% by 2030.

As the railways are ahead of these objectives, most of UIC members have accepted to strengthen their commitments end of 2019 in a new pledge, which involves:

- Changing its European relative baseline from 1990 to 2005 (CER-UIC Commitments [http://www.cer.be/sites/default/files/publication/CER-UIC\\_Sustainable\\_Mobility\\_Strategy\\_-\\_SUMMARY.pdf](http://www.cer.be/sites/default/files/publication/CER-UIC_Sustainable_Mobility_Strategy_-_SUMMARY.pdf))
- Adding carbon neutrality by 2050 as an official goal for all UIC members (not just European);
- Stating that UIC members will aim to be compatible with the UN SDG (Sustainable Development Goals).

### ***Innovation shall install railways as the backbone of future decarbonised mobility worldwide***

As stated in the European Green deal “Transport accounts for a quarter of the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions and is still growing. To achieve climate neutrality, a 90% reduction in transport emissions is needed by 2050.” This Roadmap will require a drastic improvement in the efficiency of the whole transport chain. For the railways, this means making better use of their network advantage.

Even if railways are already energy efficient, UIC will work on the digital control of a substation, reversible substations, and new fuels (hydrogen...) in order to create future decarbonised railways.

Nevertheless, complete future decarbonised mobility will only be possible if we ensure smooth interfaces between railway and public transport. Both have been working together, sometimes within the same companies for delivering mobility services, but until now they don’t consider their networks as having a duty to be interconnected in terms of design.

### **In 2021, UIC will organise a series of events to start its centenary**

In 2021, on the occasion of the centenary of its creation as an international organisation, UIC will organise a series of events dealing with these aspects: where does UIC come from? What makes UIC unique? What aspects of railway DNA offer them perspectives in the future?

Among these events, UIC will participate actively in EUROPALIA Arts Festival to be held at the end of 2021 which will focus on railways. All railways companies, both European and those around the world, will be invited to join and celebrate the Festival together.

More information will follow.

## **CONTACTS**

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