

2021 Year of Rail - on green rail transport

In 2017, the European Green Party adopted a resolution: **On the integration of the European railway network**. Since then, we have seen a rise in the number of people and volume of goods travelling by plane. Only the coronavirus crisis has succeeded in reducing flights, but no big plans have been made to secure a green recovery with a more sustainable transport system in Europe, even though the European elections in 2019 and the big climate marches have shown that Europeans want climate action. Instead, many European governments have granted state aid and bailouts to airlines without any greening conditions.

2021 is the **European Year of Rail**, which should be the year we finally see political action concerning the green transformation of Europe. The pandemic gives the European Union an unprecedented opportunity for change. When the world experiences a crisis, the chances of making the transformation towards a circular economy with a sustainable transport system are greater.

Transport accounts for about 30 % of CO₂ emissions within the EU and it is the main sector where emissions have actually increased since the 1990s. We need to reduce those emissions to fight climate change and pollution. Besides being a necessary task, transformation of the transport sector is also a chance to make mobility more just and democratic, and to make cities, countries and the EU more sustainable, healthy, and coherent, whilst creating new jobs.

The European Greens want the EU to work for:

- An integrated and extended railway network as a central part of a fossil-free European transport system
- A well-organised, up-to-date and integrated European online schedule
- Granting the right to all European municipalities with a larger population than 100.000 to be connected to a rail hub at least once an hour during daytime
- An integrated, easy and accessible common European booking system
- Securing travellers' rights to a safe and successful journey
- Strengthening digitalisation and data sharing in the rail sector
- Ensuring the highest safety standards throughout the continent, with a swift and full implementation of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS)
- Further electrification of railways
- Investments in cross-border links
- Developing an interlinked and complete network of both day and night trains across Europe
- Promoting cooperation between countries to operate more night train lines and connections
- Promoting green tourism: Interrail, night trains and cycling routes



- Making more room for bicycles in the European train system
- Making sure trains are also accessible for people with reduced mobility and disabilities
- Developing stronger tools for shifting goods from road to rail
- Strengthening workers' rights, particularly in the freight sector
- Phasing out all investments in fossil-fuel-driven transport systems
- Introducing a common high tax on kerosene that all countries in Europe should have implemented by now
- Stopping the unjust tax exemptions and subsidies for the aviation industry.

It is essential to push for investments in cross-border links, night trains and tracks, including their maintenance and where appropriate and sustainable, new and speedier railways. At the same time, it is necessary to phase out short-haul flights under 500 km. as soon as possible, especially when alternative rail journeys under 4 hours are already available. If travelling by train is to become a serious alternative to aviation, we need to ensure that it is as easy and convenient to book a ticket and travel by train as it is by plane or car – for short and medium distances, across borders, and for leisure as well at professional trips. Similarly, and on the contrary than nowadays, it should be easier and cheaper to send goods by train, lorry or plane. All European cities should have efficient public transport for daily commuting. It should be the obvious solution to take either train, bus or bike instead of car.

For the Greens, it is very important that all transport systems are accessible for everyone. When planning a trip or buying a ticket, travellers should be informed about the accessibility of each train and station, and assistance should be provided if needed. We need to establish a multi-modal through-ticketing to ensure travellers can use multiple railway company networks with a single ticket for the entire journey.

We will make sure that everybody is able to reach their destination, even when trains are delayed and alterations to a planned journey are required. Information on changes and connections should be made available in different languages. We also need to strengthen the passenger rights by ensuring proper compensation in case of cancellations and delays, as well as the due timely information, assistance and re-routing alternatives.

Travelling by train has to be affordable for all. To ensure the system suits all types of travellers, there should be a differentiated price and comfort structure. From cheap tickets and basic seating for students to more expensive 1st class tickets with greater comfort for business people, on both day and night trains.

The EU should push for hastening the process of harmonisation for the different signalling systems and train licences, as well as of interoperability between rolling stock and infrastructure within Europe to make it safer, easier and cheaper to set up border-crossing train lines.

Future European mobility entails interlinked, attractive, resource-efficient and climate-friendly means of transport within a European framework, contributing to a high quality of life in cities and well-connected rural areas. We demand member states to increase accessibility for rural areas by integrating public road transport schedule in all the rail hubs.

Trains and other green modes of transport must no longer be discriminated against as regards infrastructure charges, taxes, investment and regulation. We should create an interconnected system between cycling networks and railways in Europe - both in cities and in rural areas, in our daily lives and when we are on leisure travel, for locals and tourists. A real alliance between bicycles and trains is needed for our society, including enough space for bike carriage in every train and for parking in stations.

Shifting the transportation of goods from road to rail will make a substantial difference to the transport sector's carbon footprint. Therefore, existing EU legislation must be revised and improved to create better conditions for this necessary transition. We must properly internalise CO₂ emissions and other hidden costs of road transport for every vehicle, turning the current eurovignette system into a distance-based charging scheme. Building last-mile rail to factories and warehouses should be promoted.

Airlines pay no tax on kerosene, receive 85 % of the European Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS) allowances free of charge, and pay no VAT on international tickets. It is crucial to introduce a kerosene tax, full auctioning for aviation allowances in the EU ETS, and to set a higher price for emission allowances. The potentially useful international emissions offsetting scheme CORSIA has still many flaws and should under no circumstances replace the current EU ETS for aviation. Moreover, non-CO₂ climate impacts of aviation also need to be urgently addressed, as they are 2-4 times those of CO₂.

We need to stop subsidising new large roads, airports and airport extensions and should ban the most polluting cruise ships while taking measures to ensure a development towards environmentally friendly propulsion systems on all ships. To date, the implementation of the polluter pays principle has been deeply flawed and must be addressed by EU policies such as taxation, carbon pricing or road tolls.

It is important to strengthen the digitalisation of infrastructure networks, capacity management and to secure easy border crossings.

We should ensure coordination among countries to reduce administrative hurdles such as different rules, languages, and systems. Furthermore, we need to make sure that all operators share their data so that it is easy to book international rail trips, plan transport routes and secure a framework for accessing data (including routes, stops, timetables, prices, and the availability and accessibility of services).

Workers' rights should be an important part of the European transport strategy. New green jobs in the rail sector should also be created in an environment where fairness and decent working conditions come before free competition among big companies. Public bodies should execute their right to include decent conditions for workers into public procurement of rail services and investments