



News from Brussels – June 2021

Hi!

Here is this month's newsletter from Brussels where we take a look at what's going on at the EU level and at relevant news from UITP (The International Association of Public Transport).

COVID-19

No new support measures were taken this month in relation to COVID-19. National Recovery and Resilience Plans are still in the process of being assessed by the European Commission. All current draft assessments by the Commission (and still needing approval from the Council) can be found [here](#).

EU legislation and initiatives

Before the summer break, we take a look at the state of play of a wide range of measures at EU level.

Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy

The trend of opinions and comments on the Commission's Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy continues with the publication this month of the Council conclusions on the Strategy ([here](#)). The Council's document is very encouraging for public transport and includes a whole paragraph on how important our sector is. It includes the following statements:



«STRESSES that the 'polluter pays' and 'user pays' principles should be reflected in transport policy measures for and across all modes of transport»

«RECALLS that multimodality requires multimodal and interoperable travel information, ticketing and payment.» [...]

*«12.LOOKS FORWARD to the presentation by the Commission of the forthcoming Urban Mobility initiative and UNDERLINES in this context **the importance of promoting** active mobility such as cycling and walking, **the use of public transport** and new mobility services, effective mobility management, multimodality and sustainable means of transport in all transport modes (road, rail, waterborne and air), as called for in the Graz Declaration of 30 October 2018, 'Starting a new era: clean, safe and affordable mobility for Europe'.*

*RECALLS in this context that public transport has been seriously affected by the COVID-19 crisis and that **the policy response to the crisis should aim to restore confidence in and improve the resilience of public transport, accelerating its sustainable transformation and modernisation, while ensuring transport affordability, given the essential role of public transport in social and territorial cohesion.**»*

The Council also published an opinion entitled «Putting Rail at the forefront of Smart and Sustainable Mobility» ([here](#)) which explicitly mentions the objective of modal shift. The methodology states that the opinion was «structured according to the topics 'modal shift', 'resilience', 'passenger transport', 'freight transport', and 'networks'».

Urban Mobility Initiative

As mentioned in previous newsletters, the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy included the announcement of an Urban Mobility Package to come. The adoption of a revised Urban Mobility Package has now been pushed back by the European Commission from September 2021 to the end of the year. An open public consultation on this revision should be made available in the next few days.

In the meantime, the European Commission's DG MOVE (Directorate-General for Transport & Mobility) organised 5 major workshops with Member States and sector representatives this month on the following topics : Urban freight transport and logistics, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) and Mobility Management – and last but not least, Urban Vehicle Access Regulations (UVARs). More information on the workshops is available on DG MOVE's website [here](#).



Revision of the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive

For those looking for a comprehensive review on the upcoming revision of the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive (AFID), look no further than the recently published European Parliament think tank briefing on the plans for revision ([here](#)). The briefing includes a background report, an overview of all current EU-level reports and evaluations on this topic, and a presentation of the reactions and positions of all the different EU institutions. This is a very useful lobbying tool ahead of the discussions and debates that will be had after the summer between the legislators.

Delegated Regulation on Standards for Recharging points for electric buses

The Commission Delegated Regulation supplementing the technical specifications for recharging points for electric buses referred to in the Directive on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure is now published and available [here](#). It has not yet been published in the Official Journal of the EU and is therefore not yet in force. In any case, the act specifies a transition period of 24 months before these technical specifications become binding. Please note that this regulation only applies to charging points for electric buses that are installed after the date of application of this regulation and does not apply to recharging infrastructure for trolley buses overhead wires (catenary)

REVISED CLIMATE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AID GUIDELINES – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Earlier this month, the European Commission published a consultation on the revision of the current Climate, Energy and Environmental Aid guidelines with the objective of broadening their scope to include new areas and technologies to help deliver the Green Deal goals.

The aid measures covered by the guidelines include:

"(c) aid for the acquisition and leasing of clean transport vehicles (used for air, road, railway, inland waterway and sea and coastal passenger and freight transport), aid for the retrofitting of transport vehicles allowing them to qualify as clean transport vehicles and aid for clean service equipment;

(d) aid for the deployment of recharging or refuelling infrastructure for zero-emission and clean transport vehicles"

The period of consultation will until **August 2nd 2021**. The consultation is available [here](#).



Data act & amended rules on the legal protection of databases – public consultation

Greater availability of data is considered by the European Commission's overarching «Strategy for Data» ([here](#)) as key to achieving the full potential of the data economy.

The future proposal for a Data Act has been thought up as one of the main solutions to the lack of data availability. Its aim in part, is to solve the difficult problem of how to make more data available from the private sector. Up until now, a lot of the data rendered accessible via EU legislation, was done either for environmental reasons (INSPIRE Directive), public procurement reasons or simply limited to the public sector (Government-to-Business data, G2B, via the Open Data Directive for instance).

In more concrete terms, what we know for now is that the Data Act might do one or more of the following: B2G data sharing, B2B voluntary (and in some limited cases compulsory) data sharing, updated Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) framework and finally enhance and increase portability rights.

The public consultation closes on September 3rd. It is available [here](#). UITP will be submitting a response to the consultation.

Demand for the extension of the European Year of Rail 2021

UITP, alongside other European transport and passenger associations, has called for the Year of Rail 2021 to be extended to 2022 and expanded to include public transport. Indeed, according to these associations, “the constraining sanitary context is impeding the full deployment of stakeholders’ activities to promote rail – and obviously promoting rail transport in a context of travel restrictions is rather difficult.” With that in mind, an open letter, signed by all five organisations (UITP, EMTA, Polis, EPTO and EPF) was sent to the European Commissioner for Transport, Adina Vălean, as well as the European Commission President (Ursula von der Leyen), the European Parliament President (David Sassoli) and to the President of the European Council (Charles Michel). The letter is available [here](#).



Revision of the TEN-T Directive

The Council has adopted a first reading of the Trans-European transport network (TEN-T) Regulation paving the way for its adoption by the European Parliament followed by its publication in the Official Journal of the EU and its entry into force. Formerly a Regulation, the Parliament and the Council have agreed to turn the act into a Directive allowing Member States more flexibility in its implementation. The new rules include quicker permit-granting procedures for projects that are part of pre-identified sections of the TEN-T core network

The Council's press release following this adoption is available [here](#). It sets out quite clearly the underlying challenges of this revised Regulation and the next steps in terms of implementation.

Understanding the EU better – the Conference on the Future of Europe

The EU can seem quite far away at times, the legislative procedure can seem obscure and the jargon impenetrable. This is why, every month, we take a closer look at one of the cogs in the EU machinery, in relation with a relevant piece of EU legislation for the public transport sector.

This month, before we take a break for the summer and after a year of looking at the institutional workings of the EU, we take a look at a novel initiative that was started in December 2019 and will end in December this year : **the Conference on the future of Europe**.

The Conference was the brain child of President Macron of France as a response to the rise of populism and Brexit. However, it had a rough start as it was delayed a whole year and was only officially launched in May this year instead of last year. The pandemic is to blame of course, but not only, as the scope, supervision and possible consequences of the Conference were hotly debated between the EU institutions.

What is the Conference?

The Conference was designed as an experiment of direct democracy at EU level. The aim is to provide a space for EU citizens (rather than lobbies, public authorities etc) to express their views on what the future of Europe should look like.



It's a huge endeavour that some believe is built to fail while others believe is a sign of change to come and an opportunity perhaps even to start a Treaty change down the line.

What will the outcome of the Conference be?

This is perhaps the point that led to the most discussions and tensions between Member States and amongst the EU institutions. Some would have had the Conference results be binding on the EU (obligation to submit the outcome to the co-legislators and to enforce it). Others, quite the opposite.

As Politico describes it, the latter won in the end ([here](#)) :

«A 12-nation coalition of the unwilling – spearheaded by countries like the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland and Sweden that have lost past referendums over EU treaty change or euro membership – insisted before the opening that the exercise “should not create legal obligations, nor should it duplicate or unduly interfere with the established legislative processes.” They oppose any suggestion that the conference findings should kickstart negotiations to amend the EU’s governing treaties.»

The Conference will therefore conclude in Spring 2022, during the French presidency of the Council. The official stance, as set out on the Conference’s website is that *«the Conference is expected to reach conclusions and provide guidance on the future of Europe.»* In other words: no one knows. It’s anyone’s guess what the outcome will be since Treaty change has been taken off the table for the time being.

How to get involved

To contribute or find out more about events near you, the official website of the Conference is available [here](#).

Publications

- **Report on “Research and innovation in low-emission alternative energy for transport in Europe”**

This report, published in 2021, provides a comprehensive analysis of research and innovation in low-emission alternative energy for transport in European Union (EU) funded ongoing projects with end dates from 2019 onwards. The annex sets out a comprehensive list all of the (very) many projects



involved. The study concludes by stating "*It is also noteworthy that there is no silver bullet solution to decarbonisation and the proper use of the various alternative fuels available will be crucial*". The report is available in full [here](#).

- **European Parliamentary Study: Relaunching transport and tourism in the EU after COVID-19**

This study, commissioned by the Transport and Tourism Committee of the European Parliament, and drafted by the Parliament's Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, was published in February this year. It presents a general overview of the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on the Tourism and Transport sectors, presents the various policy responses of the EU to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic, and puts forward policy recommendations to address the challenges emerging from the crisis. All modes of transport, including urban transport, are covered by the report. It is available in full [here](#). **The study will be extremely useful to those looking for a recap of everything related to the impacts of the COVID 19 crisis on the transport sector at EU level.**

- **European Innovation Scoreboard 2021**

The European Innovation Scoreboard ([here](#)) is published and updated every year. It "*provides a comparative analysis of innovation performance in EU countries, other European countries, and regional neighbours*." One of the results highlighted by the authors this year is that:

"Sweden continues to be the EU Innovation Leader, followed by Finland, Denmark and Belgium, all with innovation performance well above the EU average."

All country profiles are accessible on the website and allow you to see the relative ranking of countries based on criteria as diverse as human resources, environmental sustainability, attractive research systems and so on and so forth.

- **UITP Study on "Contracting in Transit: the value and benefits of private contracting in North America and internationally to meet passenger needs"**

In April this year, UITP published a study on contracts in the public transport sector, specifically with an eye on the growing market for such contracts in North America. "*The purpose of this paper is to present best practices in terms of the scope and award process, contractual framework, and partnership relations between the parties and benefits of contracting*". The International case studies used to compare and contrast with the case studies in North America include Sweden, France and the UK. The study is available in full [here](#).

- **European city air quality viewer**

The European Environment Agency (EEA) published a tool ([here](#)) that allows us to view and compare pollution levels in European cities over the last two years. The air quality for instance in the Nordic



cities ranks more often than not as «good» and sometimes only as «moderate» (Copenhagen for instance).

- **Urban sustainability: how can cities become sustainable?**

The European Environment Agency (EEA) published a report earlier this month on the topic of sustainability in cities. The report is available [here](#). Although no specific part of the report is dedicated to public transport, our sector does feature prominently throughout. The study also covers the consequences of the pandemic on cities today and includes for instance an analysis of the fall in ridership levels for our sector.

Events

NO MAJOR EVENTS RELATED TO THE TRANSPORT SECTOR ARE BEING PLANNED OVER THE SUMMER IN BRUSSELS. WE'LL BE BACK WITH MORE (ONLINE) EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER!

Not a UITP member yet?

As a UITP member, you can share knowledge with a network of more than 200 public transport authorities worldwide. Read more at <https://www.uitp.org/membership-benefits> or contact Camille Roy in UITP: camille.roy@uitp.org

Any questions? Please contact me at annabelle.huet@uitp.org

Kind regards,
Annabelle