



News from Brussels – September 2020

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

As the situation continues to worsen after a short summer recess, the EU's emergency measures including its financial measures become ever more urgent and necessary.

EU institutions response

- **The European Commission**
 - *The EU Recovery and Resilience Facility*

The EU has set up a specific fund aimed at addressing the impacts of the COVID crisis. The so-called "Recovery and Resilience Facility" is set to provide €672.5bn to support investment and reforms needed in the wake of the pandemic. This Facility is divided into two separate components: a grant component, worth €312.5bn, and a loan component worth €360bn and still being negotiated between the Member States.

What we know so far is that the Facility will not be sector-specific. This means that even though the European Commission does expect local public transport to figure among the beneficiaries, the way in which each Member State allocates its funds will be demand-driven.

The official Commission documents indicate that:

"Member States can formally submit their recovery and resilience plans for assessment from the moment the Facility is legally in force. The Commission is expecting that the legislation will enter into force on 1 January 2021. The deadline for the submission of the plans is 30



April 2021. However, the Commission encourages Member States to submit their preliminary draft plans from 15 October 2020. Member States may finalise their plans following the initial presentation of the drafts to the Commission.»

More information on the Facility is available [here](#).

- *Re-open EU platform*

Now more than ever with the resurgence of the virus, the European Commission's website on travelling and tourism restrictions in the EU comes in handy (here). For every EU country, as well as Norway and Switzerland (but excluding the United Kingdom), the platform allows for a thorough overview of the travel limitations currently in force within the country as well as between countries. **The "Health and Safety" tag includes, among other things, detailed information on the safety measures applicable in public transport.**

- **The European Parliament**

- *Measures for a sustainable rail market in view of the COVID-19 pandemic*

As mentioned before the summer, the European Commission published in July a draft regulation establishing measures for a sustainable rail market in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on railway operations. This regulation aims at allowing derogations to certain provisions of Directive 2012/34/EU, in particular the articles related to track access charges (27, 31 & 32).

These measures would apply to the time-period March 1st 2020 - December 31st 2020, with a possibility of extending this period after a reassessment of the situation in November 2020.

The text has been adopted by both the European Parliament and the Council as co-legislators and should soon be published in the Official Journal of the EU.

For more information on these measures, you will find the European Parliament's press release [here](#), as well as the adopted text [here](#).

- *"Impact of Covid-19 on Urban Mobility" - a report by the EU Parliament's research services*



The EU Parliament's research services published a new briefing on the impact of Covid-19 on urban mobility just after the summer. The objective of the briefing is to provide an overview on the state of play and trends of urban transport since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The briefing presents also general recommendations for the future of smart and sustainable urban transport post COVID-19 and a set of actions on how to integrate EU response into existing policy priorities. The briefing is available in full [here](#).

- **European Union Agency for Railways**

The European Railway Agency published on 28th September a COVID-19 Information Bulletin with technical expert advice on Ventilation in Railway Vehicles. The document is available [here](#) – it provides “detailed non-binding information related to ventilation of passenger trains to safeguard the health and safety of passengers, transport workers and staff, and to re-establish trust in rail services.”

- **Committee of the Regions**

The EU's Committee of the Regions organised a public consultation this summer on the topic of “Challenges for Public Transport in Cities and Metropolitan Regions”. UITP submitted its feedback on the draft report in August 2020 and has since been in touch with the rapporteur, Mr Adam Struzik, for further discussions. UITP's feedback seeks to answer the five questions brought up in the draft report such as “How can the challenges that the COVID-19 crisis had brought for public transport be best addressed and overcome?” as well as “How can local and regional authorities and their public transport operators, who are at the forefront of procuring clean transport vehicles, add to the ambitious decarbonisation objectives of the EU Green Deal?”. Please get in touch should you wish to have access to UITP's full feedback to the questionnaire.

UITP initiatives

- UITP is taking part in a new EU-funded application called CO-APS that aims to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in public transport. The project gathers 8 partners in all and is funded by EIT Urban Mobility, an initiative of the



European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). CO-APS will be tested in four pilot cities in Europe: Istanbul, Sofia, Barcelona and Karditsa. The full press release is available [here](#).

- For more on how UITP is helping members share knowledge and coordinate their responses to the crisis, please visit the dedicated webpage [here](#).

EU legislation and initiatives

The summer months were busy with public consultations and roadmaps for upcoming legislation. As for September, it saw a slow but continued return to topics of interest before the pandemic.

The Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy

As mentioned in previous newsletters, the upcoming Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy of the European Commission is likely to be one of the most anticipated documents in the Brussels transport bubble. This strategy will set out the key areas in transport that the Commission will be taking action in, including ambitious measures for reducing CO2 emissions. It will also set out the ways in which the Commission plans to capitalise on digitalisation and automation, safety and accessibility, and how to ensure mobility remains affordable and safe for all including in remote areas.

The EU's public consultation on the new strategy was open for contributions until 23rd September. You will find UITP's position paper on the strategy available [here](#). The European Commission's draft strategy is expected to be published before the end of the year.

Rail Passenger Rights negotiations

Discussions are still ongoing between the European Parliament and the Council on the revision of the Rail Passenger Rights Regulation. The 4th and hopefully final trilogue is now confirmed on 1st October, and the institutions intend to reach an agreement there. At this stage, issues still at stake include the scope, the compensation threshold for delays and the transition period. As a reminder, the German presidency of the Council has made reaching an agreement on this Regulation a priority of its 6-month presidency.



Revision of Bus & Coach Passenger rights legislation

The European Commission is evaluating Regulation [181/2011](#) on the rights of passengers when travelling by bus and coach. Alongside the public consultation, which has just been published and is open until 2 October (see [here](#)), Steer Davies Gleave has been mandated to carry out an independent ex-post evaluation of the regulation. UITP will submit a response to the consultation that will be available publicly on the website. UITP advocates for the current scope of the Regulation to be maintained, with only a fragment of the rules applying to bus lines below 250 km.

Digital affairs

The European Commission is set to publish a first draft of the Digital Services Act before the end of the year. As such, a few Committees in the European Parliament decided before the summer to adopt an opinion on the future content of the act. The TRAN (Transport & Tourism) Committee was one of them. Initially, the TRAN draft opinion was quite vague. However, a lot of amendments were tabled that eventually added to the opinion a whole paragraph specifically on MaaS:

Among other things, the TRAN Committee;

“Draws attention to the potential Mobility as a Service (MaaS) platforms hold in digitalising, automating and decarbonising EU mobility; calls on the Commission to evaluate the deployment of balanced MaaS systems to prevent monopolies and guarantee the enforcement of relevant laws and policies and allow for a degree of control by local governments on such systems;”

This opinion has since been handed to the relevant Commission services and will most likely be taken into account. The first draft of the DSA might therefore specifically mention MaaS platforms in which case our sector will need to be particularly careful as to how the Act is worded.

As a reminder, the Act is set to:

- “increase and harmonise the responsibilities of online platforms and information service providers and reinforce the oversight over platforms’ content policies in the EU”



- “explore ex ante rules to ensure that markets characterised by large platforms with significant network effects acting as gatekeepers, remain fair and contestable for innovators, businesses, and new market entrants”

Cybersecurity

The European Commission launched a consultation on the possible revision of the Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS Directive) this summer. The deadline for submitting a response to the consultation is October 9th 2020. At the same time, ICF S.A., Wavestone and the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) have been commissioned by DG CONNECT (European Commission) to deliver a *‘Study to support the review of Directive (EU) 2016/1148 concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union (NIS Directive)’*. UITP is looking for members with expertise in this field interested in taking part in these consultations. Please get in touch if this your case.

EU Energy Tax Directive Revision

As part of the European Green Deal, the European Commission is planning to revise its Energy Tax Directive. The objective is to revise Directive 2003/96/EC in June 2021. The preparatory work is underway, as a public consultation is open for feedback from stakeholders until 14 October 2020. UITP is planning on submitting a response which will be available on the consultation’s webpage ([here](#)).

The two main objectives of this revision are:

1. aligning taxation of energy products and electricity with EU energy and climate policies, to contribute to the EU 2030 energy targets and climate neutrality by 2050;
2. preserving the EU single market by updating the scope and the structure of tax rates, and rationalising the use of optional tax exemptions and reductions.

Events in the Brussels bubble

If things were quiet event-wise at the beginning of the crisis and during the summer, September and the coming months will see their fair share of EU events being held on all



kind of topics. Here is a choice selection of a few of the most important events coming up for the Transport sector:

29th September - 2nd October: Urban Mobility Days

The first edition of the Urban Mobility Days that brings together the CIVITAS Forum Conference and the European Conference on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) will be held online this year. More information is available [here](#). The video recordings will be published after the event by the organisers on the Eltis portal, www.eltis.org.

5th-22nd October: 18th European Week of Regions and Cities

This year, the European Week of Regions and Cities is spreading over three consecutive weeks, each dedicated to a different topic: Empowering Citizens, Cohesion & Cooperation, Green Europe. The full programme for all three weeks of events is available [here](#).

22 October: “Digital Enforcement of the EU Road Transport Rules”

The Directorate General for Transport and Mobility (DG MOVE) of the European Commission is organising an online Workshop on “Digital Enforcement of the EU Road Transport Rules” on 22 October, from 10:00h – 12:30h. Registration is [here](#).

18th November: Digital Transport Days

European Commissioner for Transport Adina Valean, in cooperation with the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union, has announced that Digital Transport Days 2020 will be held this year in digital format. The conference will address to what extent the COVID-19 pandemic has affected transport and mobility, and how digitalisation can contribute to recovery and a return to a ‘new normal’ life. More information is available [here](#).

19th November: Kollektivkonferansen

The Norwegian Public Transport Conference, dedicated this year to “People in Mobility” will be held online on November 19th from 10.00 – 15.00 hrs. The conference will explore questions such as “how can humans move freely and sustainably, and how society can facilitate this? How can we create mobility solutions more adapted to individual needs and make it easier for people to choose sustainable modes of transport? Last but not least – can



we use the corona pandemic to create new and more sustainable travel habits?”
Registration is [here](#).

Understanding the EU better – the Committee of the Regions

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 will 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, with UITP having submitted feedback to one of its consultations, and in light of the upcoming European Week of Regions and Cities, **we look at what the Committee of the Regions is and what it does in the EU.**

The Committee of the Regions is an advisory body added to the EU architecture by the Maastricht treaty in 1993. It was created in part to counter balance how centralised the EU was becoming but also as a way to recognise the importance of regionally and locally elected representatives of the Member States in the EU decision-making process.

The CoR consists of 329 members from the Member States. All are elected officials at the regional or local level. It is therefore a political assembly first and foremost charged with representing regional and local authorities' interests at EU level.

The CoR must be consulted in certain areas of the EU institutions' work. These include any matters concerning local and regional government such as transport for instance, but also energy, climate change, etc. When consulted on a legislative proposal, the CoR drafts and adopts an opinion. It can also decide to adopt opinions on certain proposals even when it is not officially consulted by the EU institutions. Three principles underpin its work: subsidiarity, proximity and partnership.

Historically, the CoR's opinions have not been considered particularly important or strategic. This has to do among other things, with the fact that EU competences are often limited to national or cross-border issues. As the EU expands its areas of interest however, the CoR has found a new impetus for action and has lately been very active in contributing to EU policy-making. In the public transport sector in any case, its opinions are very often quite close to



those of local PTAs and PTOs and the CoR has been an invaluable ally on certain topics in recent years.

For more information on this topic, please refer to the Committee of the Regions' official website [here](#) as well as to the EU's dedicated webpage on the institution [here](#).

UITP News

Since then, UITP has been working hard for the last two years to design the new and improved UITP website...and we are happy to announce the new website is now up and running. It includes a brand-new Content Finder, a search engine dedicated to public transport.

The new website also has a more attractive members' section that now features the logos of our members: <https://www.uitp.org/members/>. Should your logo not feature on this page, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

In other news, UITP recently published a **policy brief** entitled "**Full Free Fare Public Transport: Objectives and Alternatives**" available in full [here](#). The brief explores the objectives, effects and alternatives to a full free fare public transport system and presents concrete examples of such systems in Europe.

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