

29 CLOSER TO BRUSSELS

E-MAGAZINE OF THE MAŁOPOLSKA REGION BRUSSELS OFFICE



#UEYearofRail!

 MAŁOPOLSKA

#EUYearofRail!

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Dear Sirs and Madams! Dear Readers!



Witold KOZŁOWSKI

Marshal of the Małopolska Region

The European Commission has declared 2021 as the European Year of the Railways.

The aim of this initiative is to promote rail as a sustainable and safe mode of transport.

This is therefore a special opportunity to talk about the future of rail transport in Europe - all the more so because we have no shortage of tasks in this area. We must face up to the challenge of ensuring proper financing of infrastructure in the coming years, ensuring the development of new transport corridors or restoring key rail links for the population.

The European Year of Rail is also an opportunity to present the investments of Małopolska in this regard. That's why I am happy to bring you another 29th issue of our e-magazine *Closer to Brussels*, the main theme of which is **#EUYearofRail!**

I encourage you to read the article on how regional governments are looking after the future of European railways. Mr Jarosław STAWIARSKI, Marshal of the Lubelskie Region, who was rapporteur for the opinion on the European Year of Rail in the European Committee of the Regions, talks about this issue. Our national carrier, the PKP, also looks after the interests of Polish railways in the international arena. Mr Tomasz LACHOWICZ, Director of the PKP S.A. Representation in Brussels, told us about his tasks.

Mr Alberto MAZZOLA, Executive Director of the Organisation of European Railways (CER), which supports national rail industry representatives, gives a behind-the-scenes look at his work. In the *Closer to Brussels* e-magazine, we must also not miss the voice of the European Commission, given to us by Mr Maurizio CASTELLETTI, Head of Unit Single European Rail Area from the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport, talking about the idea of the European Year of Rail.

However, I would particularly like to encourage you to read about successes of Małopolska in building a modern and friendly – both to residents and to the environment – railway infrastructure. In the regular column *Małopolska conquers Brussels*, Mr Łukasz SMÓŁKA, Vice-Marshall of the Małopolska Region, talks about this topic.

I wish you enjoyable reading and many inspiring rail journeys!



Witold KOZŁOWSKI
Marshal
of the Małopolska
Region

Celebrating the first-ever European Year of Rail



Maurizio CASTELLETTI

Head of Unit Single European Rail Area,
DG MOVE, European Commission

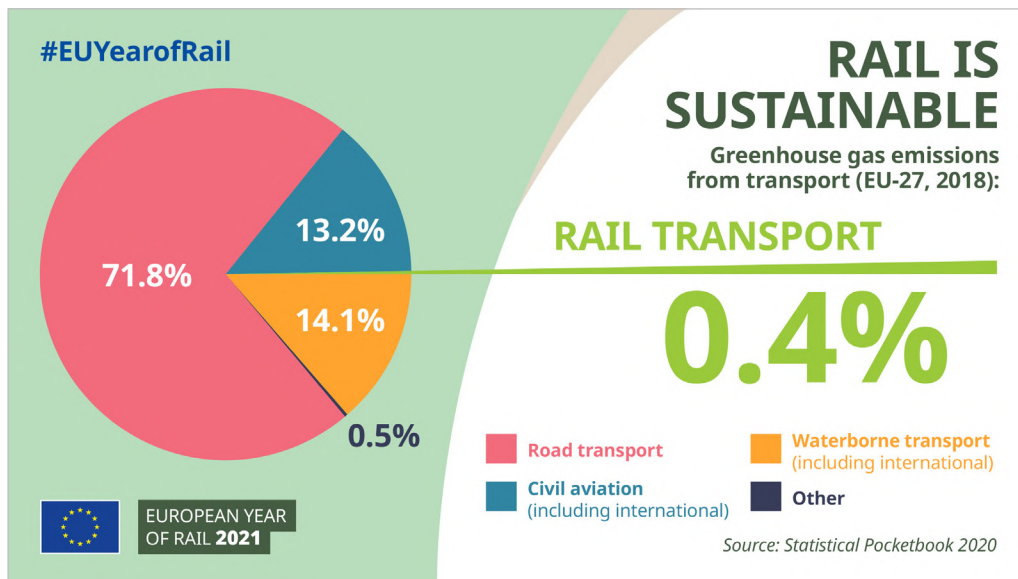
2021 is the “European Year of Rail”. It is time to celebrate the joy and benefits of rail travel, and to reflect on how much further we can go with rail.

When the European Commission proposed this European Year in March 2020, rail was not chosen at random. It was chosen because no other mode of transport can match its environmental credentials.

Rail travel only accounts for 2% of energy consumption and generates 0.4% of greenhouse gas emissions from transport (EU-27, 2018). The EU transport sector accounts for a quarter of EU greenhouse gas emissions and since we have committed to reducing these emissions by 90% by 2050 as part of our European Green Deal, rail will play a key role in the future of European mobility.

Rail’s potential is still largely untapped. While it already links many regions, towns and terminals across the continent, it must improve its long-distance and cross-border services, and increase its overall share of EU transport. Today, only 7.8% of passengers travelling over land are using rail, and for land freight, rail’s share is only 18.7% (EU-27, 2018). It is clear that rail needs to attract more customers.

The European Year of Rail is a unique opportunity to put the benefits of rail in the spotlight. We want to maximise these benefits and create momentum for rail that will have an effect far beyond 2021.



People and companies are starting to look at rail with renewed interest, and we want to help increase this interest. We want to convince travellers and businesses that the time is ripe for behavioural change: we should choose our transport mode in the same way that we make other lifestyle choices, with a climate-conscious mind-set.

We will see various different activities focusing on rail this year and we have noticed a particular interest in Poland. To date, we have registered over 240 events celebrating rail around Europe, and we know there are many more in the pipeline. These include a number of original initiatives in Poland, to mention just a few: a competition for young people launched by the Pomeranian Voivodeship^[1], greeting cards created by the Polish Post^[2], various exhibitions in the Warsaw Rail Museum (Stacja Muzeum), the TRAKO international railway fair in September in Gdansk, ... and of course this special edition of *Closer to Brussels!* Anyone can organise a Year of Rail event and I would like to encourage you to do so as well!

[1] <https://pomorskieregion.eu/konkurs-dla-modziezy-zielona-europa-kolej-na-kolej-n1309>

[2] <http://www.kolejnictwo-filatelistyka.eu/>

I would also like to highlight ongoing activities like our popular DiscoverEU programme, which regularly gives out free travel passes to 18-year-olds, allowing them to discover the continent by rail – a great opportunity to learn from other cultures and to build new friendships with fellow Europeans.

We kicked off the year^[3] together with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU, and recently announced one of the highlights for the year: the Connecting Europe Express^[4] – a special EU train that will criss-cross the continent in the autumn, with events along the route and inside the train (with the necessary health safety measures of course applied). The route will link three consecutive EU Council presidencies, leaving from Lisbon, passing through Ljubljana and finishing in Paris – with many stops in between, including in Poland. Painted in the colours of the campaign, the train will represent the unifying force of rail and the benefits of our Trans-European Transport Network. But it will also clearly point out the challenges that we still need to overcome to achieve our ultimate goal – creating a single European Railway Area without borders.

Sending a train across the whole continent is a complex undertaking, demanding a high level of cooperation from various actors in numerous countries. We must also overcome technical obstacles such as the different track gauges that we have in Europe. This project illustrates perfectly why we need to keep working together for a harmonised European rail network.

We have a clear plan in place to overcome the remaining challenges. In December 2020, we adopted our Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy^[5], with concrete milestones and measures for rail – our aim is to triple high-speed rail traffic and double rail freight traffic across Europe by 2050.

[3] https://europa.eu/year-of-rail/events/european-year-rail-launch-event_en

[4] <https://www.connectingeuropeexpress.eu/>

[5] https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/mobilitystrategy_en

Some of the Strategy's measures will be implemented this year, such as an Action Plan to boost passenger rail services. This plan will build on efforts by Member States to make key connections between cities faster through better managing infrastructure capacity, coordinating timetables, the pooling of locomotives, coaches and wagons and improving infrastructure to make new train services possible, including at night. This year will also see the launch of Europe's Rail, a research partnership that will continue the important work begun by the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking, pooling and coordinating research and innovation efforts at EU level – boosting rail through innovation.

During the European Year of Rail, we will reflect, together with the rail industry, on the path to making rail more efficient, digital and resilient. Perhaps we should see 2021 as "year zero" for rail – as a launch pad for its transformation into a modern and more attractive transport mode.

I would like to invite your readers to hop on our European Year of Rail, to get involved and to make the best of this momentum for rail. Visit the website <http://europa.eu/year-of-rail>, keep an eye out for our Connecting Europe Express when it comes to Poland this autumn – and once we can travel again, let's all try to choose rail more often.



The role of railways in Europe



Jarosław STAWIARSKI

Marshal of the Lubelskie Region

Comes from Kraśnik. Born in 1963. Experienced member of the local government, civil service official and politician. Graduate of history at the Faculty of Humanities of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, postgraduate studies in management at the University of Warsaw and postgraduate studies in education management at the Baltic College of Humanities in Koszalin. In his home town he was a teacher, school headmaster, councillor and deputy mayor. He sat on the parliamentary benches for four terms. For three years he was Secretary of State at the then Ministry of Sport and Tourism. As Deputy Minister, he was responsible for financial support for sports infrastructure. Under his leadership, around half a billion zlotys a year was spent on new facilities. He took care of the National Stadium, the Central Sports Centre and the Sports Institute. On 21 November 2018, he was appointed Marshal of the Lubelskie Region. Sport is his great passion. Privately and professionally. Always present at the most important events. He supports and cheers for the Polish national teams in various disciplines.

I believe that it is worth looking at railways in a new way. It is one of the most sustainable, energy-efficient and safe forms of passenger and freight transport. Rail is six times more energy efficient than road transport and emits nine times less CO₂ than road freight and air passenger transport. It should also be noted that railways, as an environmentally friendly means of transport, fit in with the objectives arising from the Green Deal policy and the European Union's ambition to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

Of course, at the level of the EU's regions, we face a number of challenges in this connection. I would like to highlight a few of them here.

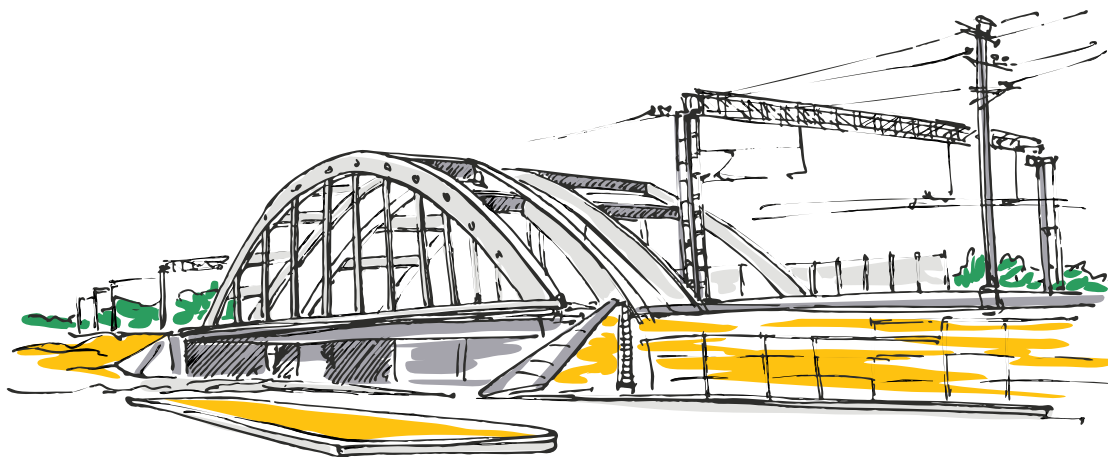
Above all, a rail-based mobility system, in order to be effective, should have a high level of integration and be a well-functioning network. This is certainly not helped by the noticeable differences in development and infrastructure quality between the Central and Eastern European region and the rest of Europe. A key role must therefore be played here by investment and the provision of appropriate funding for rail infrastructure and rolling stock to bridge the gap in the EU railway system.

Another issue worth emphasising is the ongoing urbanisation processes. These represent a major challenge for the organisation of public transport. It is necessary to take a new look at the question of planning an integrated network of urban and suburban rail infrastructure and services. The role of this type of mobility is particularly important in the development of urban agglomerations, which is why it is important to facilitate services through the development of ticketing platforms and all digital facilities enabling residents to plan their journeys using different means of transport.

An extremely important area is the efficient functioning of rail freight corridors, which are of key significance for the economic development of regions and for improving the level of trade. Here I see a major role to be played by what is known as high-speed rail in Europe, which could successfully replace air connections of up to 800 km. This also includes other initiatives such as night trains, the "Lorries on the tracks" campaign or the promotion of combined transport.

Rail transport has certainly proved its strength, for example, its reliability during a pandemic. I see great opportunities for railways to be an increasingly important part of the transport network across the EU in the coming years. I believe that investment in rail infrastructure means better accessibility of regions and greater mobility of society. They strengthen economic development and contribute to reducing emissions. Of course, we have a huge task ahead of us in determining how we want to shape public transport in the region. We draw up transport strategies and plans at regional and local level and often decide on investments and the role of the railways in these plans. This then, of course, has a direct bearing on the entire national and EU transport system.

Turning to the local area, I must note that the areas I have indicated are covered by the local government of Lublin Region in its investment activities. Lubelskie is crossed by the most important transcontinental road and rail routes, leading from Brussels, Berlin and Warsaw to Moscow, Vilnius, Minsk, Kiev, Lviv and Odessa. A broad gauge freight line also runs through here, connecting faraway China with Poland and the EU, part of the new "Silk Road" being developed since 2013.



The country's largest free zone and road-rail transshipment port and car terminal operate, connected to border crossings serving traffic on pan-European road (E-30) and rail (E-20) routes connecting the west and east of the continent. In addition, we have one of the rarest railway networks in the country. This is why, as the local government of the region, we are striving to modernise successive railway lines in the region, which will improve access to railways in the Lubelskie region and integrate us more closely into the bloodstream of the movement of people, goods and services within the EU.

Currently, 10 railway stations are being modernised or constructed in the region, including the modernisation of the railway station in Lublin – the capital of the region, investments are also being made in logistics terminals, transshipment centres and rolling stock maintenance facilities. The railway network is also being modernised by improving technical parameters and travel speeds, e.g. the main railway line connecting the capital of the region with Warsaw is being modernised, which will directly contribute to shortening travel times, increasing capacity and increasing the number of trains on the tracks. In addition, the Lublin Agglomeration Railway project will be implemented, which is intended to make it easier for the inhabitants of Puławy, Parczew, Chełm and Kraśnik to get to Lublin quickly and efficiently.

We are planning to participate in five investments carried out under the Rail Plus programme, a programme which aims to create or improve railway connections between towns with over 10 000 inhabitants and provincial cities. I am convinced that their implementation will constitute significant progress in eliminating the transport exclusion of persons with reduced mobility.

Of particular importance for the transport network of the Lubelskie Region are the plans for the New Central Polish Airport (Centralny Port Komunikacyjny – CPK). They will certainly create new opportunities to improve rail accessibility in the region. This will undoubtedly open the way to a decisive change and development in the transport offer of trains organised by the Lubelskie Region.

I hope that through cooperation and active involvement at the level of the EU institutions and the regions themselves, it will be possible to make significant progress in improving the functionality of the European railway system.



Interview **European Railways development seen by PKP**



Tomasz LACHOWICZ

Director of the PKP S.A. Representation in Brussels

Director of the PKP S.A. Representation in Brussels, accredited representative of the PKP Group to EU institutions; NATO expert and coordinator for rail transport, member of the Advisory Committee of "Rail Forum Europe" in the European Parliament. In 2002, he opened and, since then, he has been successfully managing the first representative office of a Polish company in Brussels, which, at the end of 2015, was recognized by the Bureau of Research of the Chancellery of the Polish Parliament as the best Polish business office in the Belgian capital. The representation effectively represents the interests of PKP companies in Brussels and is responsible for relations with EU institutions and public-private organisations in Belgium. Expert in EU transport policy, lobbying, EU decision-making process and EU projects. MBA graduate with honours; graduate of the Faculty of Law and Administration at the University of Warsaw, Faculty of Law at Cardinal S. Wyszyński University and postgraduate managerial studies in economy management at the Warsaw School of Economics. During his studies, he worked in the private sector as a manager (1995-2001). In 2001 he started working in the Management Office of PKP SA Head Office, in 2002 he had a professional internship in Brussels in the CER – Community of European Railways and Infrastructure Managers. Holder of a scholarship from the Flemish Government.

It has been almost 20 years since the Polskie Koleje Państwowe established its representation in Brussels. What is the role of such an institution? Does it have any successes to boast of?

Indeed, Polskie Koleje Państwowe was the first Polish company to open an office in Brussels.

Our main, but not only, activity is focused on three areas: monitoring and influencing the creation of EU legislation, which has a direct impact on shaping the macro environment of PKP companies, direct support for railway projects co-financed from EU funds and our involvement in international organisations along with cooperation with public institutions.

Over the years we have achieved many measurable benefits counted in billions of PLN. There are many successes, also those incalculable, and they are properly catalogued in the company's history.

A certain assessment of the PKP office's activity is also contained in the document of the The Bureau of Research entitled "Lobbying of the Polish business on the European Union arena", in which we were recognised as the best representation of Polish business in Brussels.

The coordination of positions in the aforementioned areas, carried out by the Representation, and the coordination of activities of individual PKP companies towards EU institutions and railway organisations allows for a coherent and uniform presentation of the position of the Polish state railway sector. This results in the introduction and adoption of many solutions postulated by PKP companies in the final provisions of EU legislation or decisions for projects co-financed from EU funds. Since I do not see any direct involvement of regional and local railways in Brussels, we also try to postulate issues which protect the area of the entire Polish railway sector.



As far as recent months are concerned, the year 2020 was a key year for the future financing of the Polish railways from EU funds in the new 2021-2027 programming period, but also a very difficult year due to the unprecedented situation and significant losses in the sector caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are talking about 24 billion losses in the European passenger rail sector and 2 billion losses for freight operators in the EU. On the one hand, the efforts of the Delegation and the entire European railway sector were focused on securing as much funds for railways as possible in the new EU budget and on the favourable finalisation of the content of fund regulations being processed in the trilogues between the European Commission, the EU Council and the European Parliament, and on the other hand on mitigating the effects of the pandemic, including ensuring the continuation of ongoing investments in railways. A measurable effect of the activities of the Representation in cooperation with the national administration is securing the possibility of further financing of rolling stock from EU funds, which is particularly important for PKP carriers, but also for local government railways. From the very beginning of the process of shaping the EU budget, the PKP Representative Office has been involved in its ongoing monitoring and active lobbying in the EU institutions – aimed at securing, within the framework of its various financial instruments, the largest possible funds and scope of support for the railways (including in particular the Polish railway sector). In this respect, it addressed its activities to the highest level of EU and national decision makers.

The EU budget was not the only important investment issue last year. Although the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted that the rail sector remains the most reliable and resilient transport option in such difficult times, the heavy losses it has suffered and the increasing risk of delaying ongoing and planned investments have called for urgent action at EU level to support the sector.

Therefore, already on 19 March last year, the PKP S.A. Representative Office addressed industry organisations and called on the heads of SNCF, OBB, DB AG and FSI representations in Brussels to take action at the European level in the context of informing and describing the situation



of the railway sector, which was affected by the situation related to Covid-19. Such activities were intended to have not only the dimension of ad-hoc assistance provided to the sector, both in the area of EU legislation and facilitation in carrying out EU projects, but also in the context of planned legislative projects for individual modes of transport and the introduction of equal conditions for competition between means of transport. As a result, in cooperation with the Delegation, a letter signed by the heads of five major sectoral organisations was prepared, addressed to the EC Vice-President, Commissioner Vestager, responsible for public aid, and the EU Commissioners for Transport and Regional Policy (EU Funds) on the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the situation of the European rail sector and its expectations from the EC. The letter includes, among other things, demands agreed with PKP companies to make fund and horizontal regulations more flexible, including those concerning the rules of public aid and public procurement.

Moreover, the EC was called upon to develop dedicated measures for rail transport within the temporary framework of state aid measures. These actions have resulted, inter alia, in the possibility of accounting for CEF projects for one year longer: DG MOVE and INEA have jointly decided to postpone the end date of the CEF Transport programme by 31/12/2024, and DG REGIO has prepared two packages making the rules for the implementation of cohesion policy investments more flexible. At the same time, the Representation has continuously monitored and provided information on all actions undertaken by the European Commission in the context of mitigating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and which may be of urgent use in supporting PKP companies at this difficult time. In addition, we are now successfully completing the several-year long legislative process on rail passengers' rights and obligations.

These are just a few examples of active involvement of the Representation in key areas of rail investment at EU level.

What are the current development directions in railway transport? What tracks will the European Year of Rail put this means of transport on?

The directions for development of the railways are primarily concerned with building competitive advantages in relation to other modes of transport and achieving a modal shift in favour of the railways: digitalisation, innovation, research and development will directly translate into rail accessibility and improved services: a common ticket, the development of automation, the development of high-speed lines in Europe, improved cross-border connections, interoperability and safety. As Grupa PKP, we also define these priorities as necessary for further development. Additionally, as we all know, a significant process of positive changes is taking place in the PKP companies: infrastructure and rolling stock are being modernised, railway stations are being renovated, we are improving accessibility of services for the elderly and people with reduced mobility, we are investing in terminals and intermodal transport.

All these investments ultimately allow us to achieve synergies resulting in improved functioning of the railway system in Poland. Additionally, we are working intensively on the development of corridors of the TEN-T network (including the Baltic-Adriatic corridor running through Małopolska) and the development of railway connections with Asia by PKP LHS and PKP Cargo.

The European Year of Rail is also important for the sector. As the expert of the Committee of the Regions for the European Year of Rail report, I can say that in the CoR report the expectations of the railways are clearly defined and you can refer to this document. Promoting the railways is particularly important now that all modes of transport have to rebuild their market position after the economic downturn. Analyses demonstrate that the recovery of the economy should accelerate in the second half of this year. It is therefore important that we, as the rail industry in Brussels, have managed to convince the European Commission to make 2021 the year of the railways. This is the first time in history that such an initiative has been targeted at transport. This shows the strength and potential of railways and their particular importance for achieving climate targets in the EU and in Poland.

The idea behind the European Year of Rail is to promote rail transport in the EU in a broad way, including, above all, increasing passenger and freight transport by rail, generating the greatest possible modal shift in favour of it and thus bringing the EU closer to achieving the strategic objectives defined in the EU Transport Strategy for low-carbon mobility. Nevertheless, we need to remember that it is not promotion that will directly influence the future of the railway sector. Its development depends primarily on funding and political objectives, both national and, above all, EU ones. In December last year, the European Commission published the aforementioned Strategy for Smart and Sustainable Mobility. This is a document resulting directly from the European Green Deal and, as we can see from it, railways have a special and leading role to play there.

Political and institutional support is, of course, necessary – both at the EU, national and regional level, hence EQF 2021 is a huge opportunity for the PKP companies, but also for railways in general. This opportunity must be used to its full extent in order to promote rail transport in the country and increase its popularity among all target groups, which are not railwaymen, but customers and businesses who do not use railways on a daily basis.

To summarise: the measures taken within the framework of the European Year of Rail are intended to give railways an appropriate strategic and political priority at the level of the authorities and decision-makers of the Member States, and at the operational level to increase the number of its users.

How do you perceive the role of the PKP in the future of European transport, both in terms of passenger and freight transport? What challenges will PKP face in the coming years?

In broad terms, it will be crucial to strengthen the position of railways in the promotion and implementation of low-carbon transport solutions in the EU, which stems, among other things, from strategic documents. The rail sector must seize the opportunity offered by the new EU policy framework. There are a number of funding instruments at EU level: RRF, CEF, Structural Funds, Invest EU, Horizon Europe. There is no escape from investment in railways in the transport sector. I am thinking here in the context of operational programmes currently being prepared, including regional programmes or the finalisation of NIP projects. The rail sector alone is set to make a 90% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050, delivered as part of a smart, competitive, safe and accessible transport system. The development of railways naturally fits in with these assumptions. The assumptions of the European Green Deal are also being implemented by solutions currently being worked out in the area of EU taxonomy or provisions of the new EU transport strategy published by the EC in December last year.

The technical pillar of the 4th railway package has recently come into force, which brings with it a number of significant changes relating primarily to the procedure for obtaining uniform safety certificates and permits for placing railway vehicles on the market. PKP Group carriers such as: PKP Cargo and PKP Intercity have their ambitions to develop international connections in the EU market, hence it is important that, under the new regulations, competences to issue these documents, depending on the area of operations and the area of use of the vehicle, were divided between national authorities and the European Railway Agency.

In terms of the main challenges facing European railways, including PKP companies, these relate to the development of services in the area I mentioned earlier, namely the development of railways through investment and digitalisation, interoperability and innovation. These are areas which require particular commitment because they have a direct impact on the operating costs of PKP companies and their competitiveness on an open market. Hence, in the PKP, we are currently analysing the market in terms of cooperation with industry and scientific entities in the context of PKP S.A. involvement in the EU programme Horizon Europe. Decisions on this matter will be made in the coming weeks.



We are also working on providing passengers with modern rolling stock (this is what the multi-billion PKP Intercity rolling stock strategy is for), good quality and capacity of infrastructure, connections with other modes of transport, better train frequency, innovative digital solutions for buying a joint ticket and additional services on board trains, and a guarantee of a safe journey.

In the area of freight, the challenge remains to ensure that as much investment as possible is made in terminals and wagons, not just intermodal platforms. In this area, too, digitalisation is playing an increasingly important role; plans to introduce automatic coupling or autonomous trains are not far off. Furthermore, making zero-emission railways and further improving the energy efficiency of railways remains a challenge. The railways are one of the leaders in this area, but we are setting ourselves new goals in this area.

As the railways, we would expect the creation of equal conditions for competition between modes of transport at EU level, and here I am thinking in particular of the stalled work on the directive on road transport charges (the Eurovignette) and the introduction of the full internalisation of external costs and VAT on fuel in international air transport. Only then will we be able to speak of equal inter-industry competition.

Night trains in Europe are back in favour (railways from Austria, France, Germany and Switzerland have joined forces and want to compete with low cost airlines): How do you assess this idea and is PKP considering introducing this type of service?

The development of international night and day railway connections is a priority for the railways. If the railway becomes the most popular means of transport for long-distance journeys, the negative impact of the transport sector on the environment will be reduced.

We know, although it is still not emphasised enough in Poland, that railways are the most environmentally friendly means of collective transport. It has over many times lower CO₂ emissions than road transport and over 8 times lower CO₂ emissions than air transport. In Poland, only in 2020, choosing to travel by train on long-distance routes (instead of road transport services) resulted in a reduction of 460,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere.

Work on revitalising night trains in the EU has been going on for a long time. We are working, for example, on TAP (telematics applications for passenger services) and FSM (Full Service Model) management initiatives. These aim to meet passenger expectations in a coordinated way and in line with rail capacity. What is more, we should also bear in mind that the digitisation processes on individual railways require a harmonious approach. The European Commission itself intends to launch a study in this area (including night trains), given the existing problems and issues, such as ticketing systems, access rates, rolling stock availability, access to infrastructure, the inclusion of specific services in PSCs, among others. The expected results of the study could include an analysis of trends and barriers and an assessment of countermeasures taken.

In addition, on 4 June this year, an initiative of 25 states (with the participation of Poland) was launched to improve international rail connections. The Platform is to serve the purpose of strengthening cooperation for the development of international passenger services. The Platform is to cooperate with infrastructure managers, operators, authorities and EU institutions. PKP participates in this work through the organisation of CER.

Some readers may remember that for some time after 2012 there was an overnight train service from Warsaw to Brussels (EN Jan Kiepura). It was a fantastic form of travel, allowing you to both rest and work in comfort. We received a request to restore such a connection from the community of Poles working in the EU institutions. That is why, among others, together with our partners, mainly DB, we are analysing such a connection, as well as other directions of railway connections. We must bear in mind that decisions on the launch of such connections are influenced by many variables, including economic calculus and the approach of the railways through which a given route is to run. Personally, I am in favour of this type of connection as an excellent alternative to travelling by private transport or air.



Community of European Railway facing new challenges



Alberto MAZZOLA

CER Executive Director

Has been CER Executive Director since January 1st 2021. His past roles have included Head of International Government Affairs for Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane (FS) and contributing to the worldwide business section of Leonardo Finmeccanica. He is also active in the European Economic and Social Committee.

The European Union was called to celebrate railways in probably the worst year ever for EU mobility. Rail - with all other modes of transport – has suffered the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, with losses of around 26 billion euros in 2020. But let's stay positive and hope vaccinations will soon allow traffic and business to resume.

Of course, the recovery relies on more than just the receding pandemic. This was clear to the EU institutions and member states when they approved a Recovery and Resilience Facility that represents the biggest ever single injection of resources into EU economies. It is clear where the EU expects these resources to be spent: the digital and green transitions. What now has to be made clear is that the rail system occupies a central role in both.

Railways are today by far the most sustainable transport mode and will keep this competitive edge. In addition, railways will strengthen their unparalleled safety records, while at the same time contributing to decongesting regional and urban road networks.



Investments in electrification (increasingly from renewable sources) and in research & innovation (for example hydrogen-fuelled trains) will ensure railways remain the cleanest mobility option. Continued investments in digitalisation will bring higher levels of automation, better quality services to rail passengers and freight clients and an even higher degree of safety. Above all, ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System) and complementary technologies such as digital automatic coupling will enable increased rail capacity. This will bring vast benefits, notably to rail freight operations.

These are not just rail ambitions. The EU Green Deal proves that this is the line traced at EU level for the future of EU mobility, while the National Recovery Plans of Member States prove that this same understanding is present at national level, with a number of rail projects among the spending priorities of the national envelopes of NextGenEU funds.

That said, the full potential of rail cannot be harnessed without continent-wide interoperability. The Fourth Railway Package set the right basis for a fully open market able to leverage the efficiencies of different rail governance models, while also setting clear rules for full EU interoperability. It also established an EU agency for railways that is finally able to lighten the administrative burden of safety certifications.



In September 2021, the European Commission is due to adopt its proposal for a revision of the Regulation on the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T). The debate will be of great importance since it will review technical standards of TEN-T corridors and seek a better alignment with European rail freight corridors.

The EU Strategy on Sustainable and Smart Mobility sets clear objectives that should directly impact the way in which we will approach the TEN-T revision. On the passenger side, it should boost the development by 2030 of a truly European high-speed network connecting major cities, able to double current high-speed rail traffic. On the freight side, digitalisation for increased infrastructure capacity as well as better capacity management rules will have to double rail freight market share by 2050 also thanks to much improved connectivity between rail and ports.

The European Year of Rail, started on 29 March 2021, provides an opportunity to confirm the ambitions for more sustainable and smart mobility with rail at its centre.

In the months ahead, Europeans will be invited to reflect on railways' contribution to building European identity.

Initiatives like DiscoverEU – the EU initiative offering Europeans turning 18 a free Interrail pass to discover the continent, its culture and ultimately their own European sense of belonging – enter directly into this spirit. We expect such programmes to find special visibility and support during this rail-focused year. It is our hope that the Year of Rail will in this way trigger much longer-lasting effects.

About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together around 70 railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 73% of the rail network length, 76% of the rail freight business and about 92% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policymakers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on Twitter @CER_railways or LinkedIn.

MAŁOPOLSKA CONQUERS BRUSSELS



 MAŁOPOLSKA

Interview **How Małopolska develops its railways with support of the European funds**



Łukasz SMÓŁKA

Vice-Marshall of the Małopolska Region

Councilor of the Region of the last term (2014-2018). From November 2015, he was the head of the office of the Minister of Infrastructure and Construction – he participated in the most important projects for the Małopolska Region in the field of road and rail infrastructure. He was previously the director of the office of the Provincial Association of Volunteer Fire Brigades of the Republic of Poland and the coordinator of the Małopolska Regional Operational Program project regarding the purchase of specialized equipment for the purpose of strengthening the rescue potential of the Małopolska Region firefighters. He is still socially involved in the development of volunteer fire brigades and local associations. A graduate of the Agricultural University of Kraków in the field of "Agricultural and forestry technique". During his studies he was an active student government activist, he also worked at the Student Science Club and sat in the Senate of the University of Agriculture.

Almost one million projects have already been realised in Małopolska thanks to European funds. What kind of projects are those?

The first thing to mention is the supply of modern rolling stock. We are currently realising two orders. The first concerns four Elf II type vehicles from Pesa Bydgoszcz S.A., which will be supplied to Koleje Małopolskie. Another 9 Impuls 2 type trains will be supplied to Małopolska by NEWAG S.A.

These will be four-unit trains, which can carry 473 seated and standing passengers. The maximum speed of both types of vehicle is 160 km/h. A distinctive feature of all the new vehicles will be the arrangement of metro-type passenger space in the middle sections, which will be better adapted to the faster exchange of passengers in agglomeration transport.

What is more, the new fleet of vehicles will be adapted to the needs of all groups of passengers, both people with reduced mobility, but also families, children, pregnant women, seniors, people with heavy luggage, and foreigners. The trains will be equipped with ramp-type devices and automatic lifts to allow people with reduced mobility to enter and exit. The project for the purchase of modern rolling stock of the Impuls 2 type is co-financed from the funds of the Regional Operational Programme of the Małopolska Region for 2014-2020, while the project for the purchase of Elf trains is co-financed under the Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment for 2014-2020.

Which of the projects currently being implemented in Małopolska, financed from European funds, can we consider to be the most important?

A milestone in the development of rail transport in Małopolska was the signing of an agreement by the Board of the Małopolska Region for the realisation of an investment "Construction and equipping of technical facilities for servicing rolling stock". The Board of the Małopolska Region concluded the contract for project co-financing from the WM Regional Operational Programme to Koleje Małopolskie. The construction of the facilities – not existing in our region yet – is an important investment, worth PLN 91 million. In the railway hall the rolling stock of the region will be serviced: Koleje Małopolskie and Polregio. This is where, among others, current repairs and those connected with rolling stock failures will be carried out, as well as their periodic inspection. A washing station will also be established here, which will ensure the all-year-round washing and cleaning of the wagons.

The hall will be equipped with the necessary technical equipment for handling rolling stock, such as an overhead crane, sub-track lathe, rail-road vehicle and stations for sand box filling, faeces removal, rolling stock de-icing.

An important aspect of this investment is also that the facilities will offer new jobs for electricians, IT specialists, warehousemen, rolling stock auditors and cleaning staff. This is a major step towards creating a fully independent rail operator.

In what direction is Małopolska developing its railway infrastructure?

Together with the PKP PLK, we obtained PLN 104 million in EU co-financing for the revitalisation of railway line no. 117 on the section between Kalwaria Zebrzydowska and Andrychów. Modernisation work will commence in July 2020. Completion of the investment on this route will ensure more efficient travel in the region, and new and rebuilt stops – better access to trains, which will improve living conditions for residents of Małopolska.

EU funds have also made it possible to carry out smaller investments. Which of them are worth mentioning?

Investments co-financed by the Regional Operational Programme also include Park&Ride car parks, which have been constructed in various parts of Lesser Poland (Małopolska), including Miechów, Stary Sącz and Brzesko. Each facility has at least 130 parking lots (including some for people with disabilities), spaces for buses, a shelter for bicycles, monitoring and green areas. Similar car parks will also be built in Kłaj, Dąbrowa and Proszowice. P&R car parks not only improve comfort for public transport travellers, but also have a positive impact on the environment by reducing CO₂ emissions. This fits in with 2021, which the European Union has designated the "European Year of Rail" to promote rail as a sustainable mode of transport, among other things.

How is the region going to use the funds for rail transport in the new EU financial perspective?

Although consultations on the draft Partnership Agreement for 2021-2027 are still in progress, we can already say that EU funds will ensure the resilient development of rail transport in Małopolska. This is evidenced by the division of funds into individual national programmes, a large part of which relates to our region. We are talking about EUR 25.1 billion which will be allocated to infrastructure and the environment.



Questio Iuris



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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future

{SWD(2020) 331 final}

<...>

FLAGSHIP 3 – MAKING INTERURBAN AND URBAN MOBILITY MORE SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY

31. Decisive action is needed to transform the transport sector into a truly multimodal system of sustainable and smart mobility services. To achieve this, Europe should build a high quality transport network with high-speed rail services on short-haul distances and with clean aviation services improving coverage of long-haul routes. The Commission will work towards creating enabling conditions for transport operators to offer travellers by 2030 carbon-neutral choices for scheduled collective travel below 500 km within the EU. In 2021-2022, the Commission will pursue this ambition, when revising the relevant EU legislation. Subject to compliance with competition law, airlines should sell an increasing number of multimodal tickets. Investment should be geared towards upgrading the necessary TEN-T infrastructure to enable the shift towards more sustainable links. Action will be taken to build an overall transport system where EU investments, State aid, rules for capacity allocation and public service obligations (PSOs) are geared towards fulfilling mobility needs and incentivising different multimodal options.

32. The **European Year of Rail of 2021 is an excellent opportunity for Member States, the Commission and the rail sector to boost cross-European connections.** With the implementation of the Fourth Railway Package and through the opening of rail markets to competition, railway operators will become more responsive to customer needs, and improve the quality of their services and their cost-effectiveness. Harmonised EU-wide vehicle approval will also reduce costs for cross-border trains. Completing the TEN-T, including the high-speed lines, will provide better connections along the main corridors. Improving passengers' awareness about their rights and ensuring non-discriminatory provision of travel information, including through-ticket offers, will further boost the rail attractiveness for customers.
33. In 2021, the Commission will propose **an action plan to boost long-distance and cross-border passenger rail services.** This plan will build on efforts by Member States to make key connections between cities faster by better-managed capacity, coordinated timetabling, pools for rolling stock and targeted infrastructure improvements to boost new train services including at night. Platforms or other organisational structures for this purpose should be open to all Member States. Pilot services on some routes involving all interested stakeholders should be supported, and a combination of public service contracts and open access services could test different models for new connections and services, with the aim of boosting 15 pilots by 2030.
34. The Single European Rail Area needs to be enhanced and the Commission will consider **measures to expand the rail market**²⁷, addressing the needs of railway undertakings for access to high quality capacity maximising the use of rail infrastructure. **Cross-border tickets should become easier to use and to buy.** Starting in 2021, the Commission will propose regulatory measures to enable innovative and flexible tickets that combine various transport modes and give passengers true options for door-to-door travel.

²⁷ In particular the Commission will assess the interplay among Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 with Directive 2012/34/EU, Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 and Directive 92/106/EEC.

<...>

6 CONCLUSIONS

109. The recovery from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic should be used to accelerate the decarbonisation and modernisation of the entire transport and mobility system, limiting its negative impact on the environment and improving the safety and health of our citizens. **The twin green and digital transitions should reshape the sector, redraw connectivity and re-energise the economy.** The Commission acknowledges that this transformation – which needs to be socially fair and just – will not come easily, and will require the full dedication and support from all transport actors, as well as a substantial increase of growth-generating investment from public and private sectors.
110. The sustainable European transport system that the EU strives for must be smart, flexible and adaptable to ever-changing transport patterns and needs, based on cutting-edge technological advancements to provide seamless, safe and secure connectivity to all European citizens. **Transport should showcase European ingenuity and industriousness – standing at the vanguard of research, innovation and entrepreneurship, and driving the twin transitions.**
111. The Commission is putting forward a comprehensive set of measures listed in this strategy's action plan to put the EU on the path to creating the sustainable, smart and resilient mobility system of the future and bringing about the fundamental changes needed to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal. These efforts can only be successful if there is sufficient commitment by all those concerned, namely European institutions, Member States and their authorities at all levels of government, stakeholders, businesses as well as citizens.



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