

Press Release

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Connecting Europe Express train starts its journey from Lisbon: hop on!

Over the next month, the special European train will stop in more than 100 towns and cities in 26 countries across the continent

The Connecting Europe Express is one of the key initiatives of the European Year of Rail 2021 and aims to draw attention to the many benefits of rail in both the passenger and freight sectors. It also feeds into the EU's overarching goal set out under the European Green Deal of encouraging a 'shift to rail' across the EU in order to decarbonise transport flows and increase sustainable mobility. The importance of the territorial dimension of the initiative has been underlined by the European Commissioner for Transport, Adina Vălean, in a letter sent to the **European Committee of the Regions (CoR) President Apostolos Tzitzikostas**, which invited all members of the CoR to join the project and visit the train at one of its destinations.

Rail is one of the most sustainable forms of transportation and its expansion throughout Europe is vital to achieve the goal of climate neutrality by 2050 as set out in the European Green Deal. 2021 has officially been designated as the **European Year of Rail** and on Europe Day (9 May) the European Commission unveiled the route and destinations of the **Connecting Europe Express (CEE)**. The train sets out from Lisbon today and will have passed through more than 100 towns and cities in 23 Member States and three neighbouring European countries by the time it arrives in Paris, its final destination, on 7 October. Railway companies from different EU Member States have come together to make this unique 36-day train journey happen.

Fernando Medina (PT/PES), Mayor of Lisbon and CoR member, declared: *"It is with great joy that Lisbon is the departure station for the Connecting Europe Express. It will undoubtedly be a memorable journey from Lisbon to Paris, connecting 26 countries in 36 days. Lisbon has long been committed to sustainable mobility, and this train adventure is a moment of strong significance for our city. EU commitment to the railway sets us on the right track to fight climate change. It is greener and more sustainable, but also more comfortable, cheaper and safer transportation. All aboard, and safe journey!"*

European Commissioner for Transport, **Adina Vălean** said: *"Rail has shaped our rich, common history. But, rail is also Europe's future, our route to mitigating climate change and powering economic recovery from the pandemic, as we build a carbon-neutral transport sector. Over the coming weeks, the Connecting Europe Express will become a rolling conference, laboratory and forum for public debate on how to make rail the transport mode of choice for passengers and businesses alike. Please give us a warm welcome when we stop at a railway station near you."*

The Committee of the Regions and its Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER) have been actively involved in the European Year of Rail 2021, organising several local events together with its members across the EU in order to shine a light on the benefits of rail for both the decarbonisation of transport under the Green Deal and regional development. Many of these messages were echoed at the first of the **European Commission's CEE conferences** hosted today in Lisbon, when the **"Next Stop" podcast** produced by the CoR's spring 2021 trainees and the expectations of young people were centre stage as the backdrop to a high-level panel discussion.

Background Information

The CoR adopted in October 2020 its opinion on the European Year of Rail (EYR) 2021 calling for a leading role for rail in national and regional transport plans, recalling the low external costs of rail and pointing to the need for a long-term financing mechanism for sustainable transport at EU level. Please read the interview with rapporteur **Jarosław Piotr Stawiarski** (PL/ECR), Marshal of the Polish Region of Lubelskie, [here](#).

During its last plenary session before the Summer break, **the CoR adopted an opinion focussed on the European Union's Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy**. The **text** prepared by rapporteur **Robert van Asten** (NL/RE), Alderman of The Hague Municipality, highlights the need for cities and regions to put greater emphasis on encouraging zero-emission mobility, promoting active and shared modes of transportation, re-shaping urban mobility and better connecting rural areas.

A podcast series, "Next Stop", produced by the CoR's spring 2021 Trainees addresses the EYR 2021 and its objectives from the perspective of young people – click [here](#) to listen.

[Click here](#) to discover the CoR's Green Deal Going Local initiative.

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The European Committee of the Regions

The European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States. Created in 1994 following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, its mission is to involve regional and local authorities in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. To sit on the European Committee of the Regions, all of its 329 members and 329 alternates must either hold an electoral mandate or be politically accountable to an elected assembly in their home regions and cities. [Click here](#) for more details on your national delegation.

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