The European Commission takes very seriously its responsibility to promote more sustainable forms of transport, especially in light of the commitment contained in the Commission’s communication on a European Green Deal\(^1\) of no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. Regarding EU-funded projects, the specific rules for determining eligibility of travel costs are defined by the granting authority\(^2\) in the relevant call for proposals, based on the appropriate legal basis. The recent experience of implementing directly managed programmes during the pandemic has highlighted the successful way in which online meetings and events can replace physical ones, but has also highlighted the shortcomings. This experience will be taken into account by authorising officers when defining the eligibility rules in future calls for proposals under direct management.

In the view of the Commission, it would not be possible or desirable to impose horizontal travel rules across the breadth of EU-funded projects, as authorising officers require discretion in setting the necessary eligibility rules for travel in order to achieve the objectives of the programme. Notwithstanding this, in 2021 the Commission decided that, when reimbursing travel costs in directly managed programmes using unit costs, the authorising officer can accommodate travel by rail or bus as an alternative to air travel\(^3\). This provision has been rolled out with the new EU programmes under the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and will be re-evaluated during the course of 2023.

In addition, as set out in the Communication on greening the Commission\(^4\), internal guidelines have been issued to optimise the organisation of missions and prioritise sustainable travel modes so as to reduce emissions from staff and experts travel. This applies in the first instance to experts whose travel costs are borne by the Commission under its administrative budget (attending comitology and expert group meetings), but a similar approach should apply for all other external experts or speakers invited by the Commission to meetings, conferences or events, in particular when travel costs are financed by the Commission.

On a general note and with regard to administrative expenditure under MFF Heading seven, the Commission has reduced its mission cost budget line by 16.4% in 2022, and cut again by 15.6% in its proposal for the 2023 Draft Budget. We expect all the institutions to show the same ambition.

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\(^1\) [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/communication-european-green-deal_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/communication-european-green-deal_en)
\(^2\) The Commission/Executive Agencies in direct management or Member-State authorities in shared management.
\(^3\) Commission Decision C(2021)35 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework.
\(^4\) C(2022) 2230 final, p. 11.