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<Commission>{TRAN}Committee on Transport and Tourism</Commission>

<RefProc>2021/2156(DEC)</RefProc>

<Date>{13/01/2022}13.1.2022</Date>

<TitreType>OPINION</TitreType>

<CommissionResp>of the Committee on Transport and Tourism</CommissionResp>

<CommissionInt>for the Committee on Budgetary Control</CommissionInt>

<Titre>on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking (now the Europe’s Rail Joint Undertaking) for the financial year 2020</Titre>

<DocRef>(2021/2156(DEC))</DocRef>

Rapporteur for opinion: <Depute>Gheorghe Falcă</Depute>

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Transport and Tourism calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the finding of the Court of Auditors that the transactions underlying the accounts of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking ('the Undertaking') for the financial year 2020 are, in all material respect, legal and regular;

2. Notes that it is estimated that the total value of the activities performed in 2020 amounts to EUR 119.4 million (of which EUR 110.3 million delivered by the members other than the Union);

3. Notes that the Undertaking’s annual budget for 2020 was EUR 89.7 million in commitment appropriations and EUR 80.3 million in payment appropriations; notes that the budget implementation rate was 100 % for the commitment appropriations and 81% for the payment appropriations;

4. Notes that the 2020 certificates entering the validation process in 2021 are foreseen to result in EUR 71.8 million in IKOP (in kind contributions for operational activities); notes that the other members declared EUR 205 million in cumulative in kind contributions in additional activities IKAA (2016-2020), 71 % above the regulatory obligation of a minimum of EUR 120 million, of which EUR 165.5 million have already been certified by the Undertaking (as at 1st May 2021);

5. Notes that, in 2020, the Undertaking awarded 19 grants for research and innovation activities as a result of the call launched in January 2020 to be co-funded by the Undertaking up to EUR 75.3 million (for a total value of EUR 147.7 million); salutes the fact that 87 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) participated to the 2020 call (21.4 %); 46 SMEs were retained for funding (52.9 %). SMEs represent 29.1 % of the entities selected in the open call projects;

6. Commends the mitigation measures taken by the Undertaking to limit delays in the projects following the Covid-19 crisis; notes that due to the Covid-19 crisis, some of the payments initially foreseen for the year 2020 became due only in 2021; notes in that regard that the Undertaking is taking the necessary measures to ensure that the payment appropriations are available for re-activation in the following year;

7. Notes that, by the end of 2020, the Programme reached pivotal milestones in terms of Programme implementation, with almost all its resources committed to activities and 60 % of the Programme completed, with the objective of the operational demonstrations of its projects in 2022-2023 and paving the way for Europe’s rail joint undertaking research and innovation activities;

8. Commends the slight increase of the number of participants from underrepresented Member States in the 2020 call; welcomes the ongoing work on collaboration agreements with various European regions and European agencies and bodies in order to increase synergies with other Union programmes and funds, as well as with international organizations and bodies;

9. Highlights the role of the Undertaking in contributing to the objectives of the European Green Deal; welcomes, in this respect, the research and innovation efforts of the Undertaking to achieve a more sustainable, digital, resource-efficient, attractive, competitive and reliable railway system in Europe, while contributing to the resilience of the rail sector, which enabled the supply chain to be maintained during the COVID-19 outbreak;

10. Encourages the Undertaking to develop, integrate, demonstrate, and validate innovative technologies and solutions in order to remove the remaining technical obstacles holding the rail sector back in terms of interoperability, product implementation and efficiency, and to reduce the negative externalities in close cooperation with stakeholders of the entire railway value chain in particular SMEs, research and technology centres and universities;

11. Welcomes the upgrading of the Undertaking in the new Horizon Europe programme into a new partnership named Europe's Rail, in order to contribute further to a modal shift towards rail, in line with the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, the political priority demonstrated by the designation of 2021 as the European Year of Rail and the broader European Green Deal objective; encourages the Undertaking to promote multimodality and the use of public transport, to foster automation and digitalisation of the rail sector and to include, in the research programme, work with other modes of transport in order to pave the way towards seamless and integrated transport;

12. Welcomes the fact that the Undertaking carried out a staff survey for the first time and that, as a consequence, an action plan was drawn up in order to address the key aspects resulting from it, including the establishment of a “well-being training programme” to provide support for staff during the pandemic;

13. Commends the Undertaking’s continued reporting, since 2018, on its contribution to the attainment of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals, and, in particular, on its contribution to the reduction of the life-cycle cost of the railway transport;

14. Highlights the need to further develop synergies between the new partnership and existing funding mechanisms and to make full use of opportunities for projects funded under Union programmes such as Connecting Europe Facility, Digital Europe Plan, European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund, as well as InvestEU;

15. Welcomes the continued implementation of the Undertaking’s Anti-Fraud Strategy 2017-2020 which didn’t result in any cases of “close monitoring due to an assessment of high-risk of fraud” or in any file being sent to OLAF for investigation;

16. Proposes that Parliament grants discharge to the Executive Director of the Europe’s Rail Joint Undertaking in respect of the implementation of the Undertaking´s budget for the financial year 2020.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| **Date adopted** | 13.1.2022 |  |  |  |
| **Result of final vote** | +:–:0: | 4315 |
| **Members present for the final vote** | Magdalena Adamowicz, Andris Ameriks, José Ramón Bauzá Díaz, Lars Patrick Berg, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Paolo Borchia, Karolin Braunsberger-Reinhold, Marco Campomenosi, Ciarán Cuffe, Jakop G. Dalunde, Karima Delli, Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, Gheorghe Falcă, Giuseppe Ferrandino, Mario Furore, Søren Gade, Isabel García Muñoz, Jens Gieseke, Elsi Katainen, Kateřina Konečná, Elena Kountoura, Julie Lechanteux, Bogusław Liberadzki, Peter Lundgren, Benoît Lutgen, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Tilly Metz, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Caroline Nagtegaal, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Philippe Olivier, João Pimenta Lopes, Rovana Plumb, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Dominique Riquet, Massimiliano Salini, Vera Tax, Barbara Thaler, István Ujhelyi, Henna Virkkunen, Petar Vitanov, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Lucia Vuolo, Roberts Zīle, Kosma Złotowski |
| **Substitutes present for the final vote** | Clare Daly, Maria Grapini, Roman Haider, Kathleen Van Brempt |

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| 43 | + |
| ECR | Lars Patrick Berg, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Roberts Zīle, Kosma Złotowski |
| NI | Mario Furore |
| PPE | Magdalena Adamowicz, Karolin Braunsberger-Reinhold, Gheorghe Falcă, Jens Gieseke, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Benoît Lutgen, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Massimiliano Salini, Barbara Thaler, Henna Virkkunen, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Lucia Vuolo |
| Renew | José Ramón Bauzá Díaz, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Søren Gade, Elsi Katainen, Caroline Nagtegaal, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Dominique Riquet |
| S&D | Andris Ameriks, Giuseppe Ferrandino, Isabel García Muñoz, Maria Grapini, Bogusław Liberadzki, Rovana Plumb, Vera Tax, István Ujhelyi, Kathleen Van Brempt, Petar Vitanov |
| The Left | Clare Daly, Kateřina Konečná, Elena Kountoura |
| Verts/ALE | Ciarán Cuffe, Jakop G. Dalunde, Karima Delli, Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, Tilly Metz |

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| ECR | Peter Lundgren |

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| 5 | 0 |
| ID | Paolo Borchia, Marco Campomenosi, Roman Haider, Julie Lechanteux, Philippe Olivier |

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention