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Madame Yaël Braun-Pivet
Présidente de l'Assemblée nationale
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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Assemblée nationale for its Opinion on the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy {COM (2020) 789 final} ('the Strategy') and the legislative proposals submitted in this context.

The Commission welcomes the Assemblée nationale's support for the objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector. The Commission acknowledges that the Strategy sets out an ambitious and comprehensive action plan with specific initiatives to support the green and digital transition of the European Union's transport sector, and to increase the resilience of our transport and mobility systems. Considering the scope of the challenges addressed by the Strategy, and in particular the need to decrease the transport sector's greenhouse gas emissions by 90% in line with the European Green Deal¹, it is indeed necessary to set an ambitious agenda for the green and digital transition of the transport sector at European Union level and to implement it in a timely fashion.

Regarding the funding planned to support a higher uptake of rail transport, in the period 2021-2027 the Commission will continue to support rail investments with priority given to cross-border projects, rail access to ports, airports and terminals, capacity enhancement in nodes and digitalisation with the European Rail Traffic Management System. Approximately EUR 80 billion could be made available through the different instruments. The European Investment Bank will also continue to invest in rail in line with its Climate Bank Roadmap. Financial instruments and/or budgetary guarantees are also made available under InvestEU to mobilise substantial public and private investment to projects and operators including railway investment. Supporting the development of European Union inland waterways, including through funding, is a key objective of the Commission's NAIADES III action plan², which was adopted in June 2021. Based on the Strategy, this action plan contains a flagship dedicated to supporting this sector in its transition to zero-emissions vessels.

¹ COM(2019) 640 final.

² COM(2021) 324 final.

The Commission has addressed the role of public transport and the bicycle industry in the new European Urban Mobility Framework³ that was presented in December 2021. The Commission's overall aim is to create an enabling European Union framework for Member States, regions and cities to develop safe, accessible, inclusive, smart, resilient and zero-emission urban mobility well ahead of 2050.

The new framework announces, among others, a more ambitious approach to sustainable urban mobility planning and related indicators. This links with new requirements put forward in the revised TEN-T Regulation for the largest 424 European Union cities on the TEN-T network to adopt a sustainable urban mobility plan and collect relevant data.

In its Communication on the new EU Urban Mobility Framework, the Commission announced its intentions to publish a Commission recommendation on the national programme to support regions and cities in the roll-out of effective sustainable urban mobility plans. Preparatory work is under way. It aims at bringing urban transport one step closer to climate-neutral mobility. Many towns, cities and regions throughout the European Union have previously acted, with over 1,000 Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (or similar plans) currently in place.

More targeted European Union funding and better synergies between different programmes to support these actions are additional points of the strategy. For example, under the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme, the Commission recently kicked-off a 'Mission' to create 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030, turning these cities into living labs that inspire all other cities.

Moreover, in order to specifically address the employment and social impacts of the transition, the Commission presented in December 2021 a proposal for Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality, which provides concrete guidance to Member States, including to support quality employment and access to quality education and training, notably on key sectors of the transition, such as mobility. It also proposes to strengthen the evidence base, highlighting the need to further develop the concept of transport poverty.

The Commission has also presented specific measures to address the skills needs. The 2020 European Skills Agenda aims to empower individuals to learn and make sure their skills are fit for the twin transition. Five partnerships under the Pact for Skills were established, committing to the up- and reskilling of 1.5 million people in the coming years, with the Automotive Skills Alliance⁴ having joined the Pact for Skills in November 2020. In December 2021, the Commission published proposals for two Council Recommendations, one on individual learning accounts, and the other on micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability, another effort to re-skill and up-skill the workforce to the green (and digital) transition.

³ COM(2021) 811 final.

⁴ <https://automotive-skills-alliance.eu/>

The operations financed under European Social Fund Plus are part of the key tools for enhancing employability and re-skilling of workers. The programming will address the social aspects of the green and digital transition in parallel and complement the Just Transition programming, specifically tailored to target employment and training needs resulting from the transition. The Commission affirms the importance of addressing the territorial dimension as part of the green and digital transition of the transport sector. In that regard, the Strategy highlights the importance of ensuring adequate connectivity, including with rural, suburban and remote areas, and with outermost regions and islands. This is especially addressed in flagship 9 of the Strategy, which focuses on making mobility fair and just for all. To support this, the Commission published in 2021 its long-term vision for the EU's rural areas⁵.

The Commission thanks the Assemblée nationale for its support for the Fit for 55 package. The Commission takes note of its call to mobilise the necessary financial means to invest in all forms of low-carbon and renewable energy to promote energy neutrality. Within its Fit for 55 package the Commission has already proposed stricter CO₂ emission performance standards for cars and vans that will ensure that by 2035, vehicle manufacturers can only sell zero emission cars in the European Union. This proposal was accompanied by a proposal for a regulation on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure that ensures that there will be a minimum recharging and refuelling infrastructure across the European Union to support the uptake of electric and hydrogen vehicles.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility is available to support the uptake of electric vehicles and the deployment of infrastructure. Other financing instruments available for deployment of infrastructure include the European structural funds, the Connecting Europe Facility and InvestEU. In particular, the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Facility under the Connecting Europe Facility has a total budget of EUR 1.5 billion reserved for refuelling and recharging infrastructure in the first three years of its operation.

The Commission takes note of the Assemblée nationale's invitation to the European Union institutions regarding research and development in the field of sustainable mobility. The Strategy stresses the importance of supporting research and innovation of sustainable and competitive transport solutions. The Commission has set out to drive the research and deployment of modern and sustainable transport technologies. These are key pre-requisites for achieving our 2030 and 2050 climate targets.

The Commission agrees with the importance of increasing the availability of refuelling and recharging infrastructure to support the uptake of zero-emission vehicles. In this regard, the Commission has proposed in July 2021, as part of the Fit for 55 package, a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure, and repealing Directive 2014/94/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council⁶. The aim of the proposal is to ensure that all users of alternatively fuelled vehicles (including vessels and aircraft) can move around the

⁵ COM(2021) 345 final.

⁶ COM(2021) 559 final.

European Union smoothly thanks to the availability and usability of a dense, widespread network of alternative fuels infrastructure.

The Commission appreciates the support of the Assemblée nationale for the Efficient and Green Mobility package of 14 December 2021. It agrees with the need to inform citizens, but also businesses, about the environmental impact of their mobility choices. As announced in the Strategy, a new initiative – CountEmissions EU – is currently in preparation. It will aim to set out a common framework to calculate and report transport-related greenhouse gas emissions. This framework could be applied to both passenger and freight transport.

The Commission considers that the contribution of conventional biofuels to decarbonise transport is limited due their impact on indirect land use change. Against this background, the Renewable Energy Directive limits the contribution of such fuels towards the targets for renewable energy and focusses on the promotion of advanced biofuels. Member States are not required to promote the use of conventional biofuels.

Regarding Sustainable Aviation Fuels, the Commission put forward the RefuelEU Aviation proposal⁷, as part of the Fit for 55 package. The core aim being to ensure a level playing field for the aviation industry in the European Union by putting forward a technology-neutral framework that enables our industry to find the most suitable solutions to decarbonising transport in terms of the fuels used.

In the path towards sustainability, aviation relies upon a basket of measures that include market-based measures (like the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation and the Emission Trading System), innovation, new type of aircrafts powered by hydrogen and smaller planes with electricity, more optimal flightpaths and other new innovative solutions. But this is still not enough. The most important solution in aviation industry would become the uptake of Sustainable Aviation Fuels. The Commission has proposed targets for shares of sustainable aviation fuels blended of 5% by 2030 and 63% by 2050. The aviation internal market must ensure common levels of sustainability, as it must do for safety and security to ensure that competition is not distorted.

Finally, as part of the Fit for 55 package, the Commission has proposed the Social Climate Fund to address the social impacts on the most vulnerable citizens and households that may arise from emissions trading for the two new sectors of buildings and road transport that the Commission has also proposed. At the same time, the mechanism through which the Social Climate Fund would work would allow Member States to use the new resources generated by emissions trading also to address any pre-existing energy poverty issues and favours the social acceptability of the Green Deal as a pillar of the ecological transition in the European Union.

⁷ COM(2021) 561 final.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Assemblée nationale and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Adina Vălean
Member of the Commission*