

Are the principles and criteria for designing the core network, as set out above, adequate and practicable? What are their strengths and weaknesses, and what else could be taken into account?

In regards to the general principles that the TEN-T relies on, all vital elements that need to be considered are given special attention in creating a viable, efficient and sustainable transport infrastructure. Imposing multimodality on the TEN-T network as core principle will ensure the efficient implementation of the different alternatives to transport modes. We expect this efficiency to result in lower costs and a smaller environmental impact since we our goal is to improve the turning into account of those means of transport that have a reduced environmental impact. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions should remain our top priority, next to reducing other pollution sources, such as phonic pollutants. We thus see railway transport as the mode of transport that is the closest to these objectives and its promotion as a solution to many of these problems.

Club Feroviar especially appreciates the increasing role of the TEN-T network in connecting Europe to Asia, in the east, thus turning into account and integrating the infrastructure of the countries in Eastern Europe, especially that of the new Member States, to the TEN-T network.¹

To that end, we welcome the improved relationship with the infrastructure of third countries (“The future TEN-T should be linked – in a more strategic way – with key infrastructure in third countries.”). Therefore, we believe it is very important to carry on the TRACECA programme and particularly accentuate the importance of the Port of Constanța to the connections with Caucasian countries and further.

In what concerns the identification of the nodes that will determine the general structure of the core network, we expect a more intense implication of national authorities in identifying these strategic nodes. We are thus hoping that they will consider not only their importance in the current context, but also their future role, considering the different regional development plans and the economic reviving projects of some cities that might trigger a significant traffic volume.

We believe the third out of the four major successive phases that are considered when planning the core network requires special attention.² The relevant technical parameters that need to be applied, according to the operational and capacity needs, should be clearly established before initiating feasibility studies and should be made public in a transparent way that leaves no room for interpretation.

In regards to laying the connections as straight as possible, we find extremely well emphasized the fact that this should be made only after carrying out an objective analysis that will consider several aspects as presented in the Commission's Consultation Working Document. It will, not least, be considered the costs of such an infrastructure project as they increase proportionally with laying a route as direct as possible. We are obviously talking about difficult relief and especially railway projects. In exchange, also in the case of railway projects, choosing a direct route is many times mandatory for facilitating higher speeds.

1 “It will, not least, be important to link East and West, old and new Member States.” *Commission Working Document - Consultation on The Future Trans-European Transport Network Policy*

2 Planning the core network involves four successive major steps: 1. Identifying the main nodes, which configure the overall layout of the network. 2. Linking the main nodes and selecting intermediate nodes for inclusion into the network. 3. Determining the relevant technical parameters to be applied, according to functional and capacity needs. 4. Including relevant complementary or auxiliary hard or soft infrastructure, so as to meet the requirements of operators and users, in line with specific policy objectives, and to enhance efficiency and sustainability.

To what extent do the supplementary infrastructure measures contribute to the objectives of a future-oriented transport system, and are there ways to strengthen their contribution?

Additional infrastructure measures should be considered crucial in transforming the transport system and integrating it within a sustainable society. This is why we believe it is necessary to prioritize those projects which are focused on reducing power consumption and pollution in different areas. We also consider necessary and welcome the introduction of a set of criteria and specific standards that could be defined in the new orientation of the TEN-T. We believe traffic decongestion and efficiency should be attained by stimulating and promoting intermodality, discouraging road transport and using intelligent transport systems (ITS). We also need to identify measures to simulate the industry's absorption of progress in infrastructure and rolling stock. Eco-friendly technologies usually trigger higher costs. If the TEN-T perspectives followed only to promote these technologies without identifying the measures that could make them available, the consequences would generate a gap between different regions (or it would accentuate the already existing gap), and we are mainly referring to the gap between Eastern and Western EU.

That is why it is important to struggle for making these technologies available and improving the cost/benefit ratio..

In what concerns identifying projects in the area that could bring European added value to the central network, Club Feroviar believe it is important to establish a priority axis on a high-speed railway line in Romania. Agreements have already been signed by the Hungarian and Romanian governments referring to the extension of the high-speed line, currently defined as the Priority Axis 17, towards the east on Vienna - Bratislava – Budapest – Bucharest – Constanța route. Such a project could bring all the particular advantages of a high-speed line and stimulate the finalization of a West-East European axis.

What specific role could TEN-T planning in general play in boosting the transport sector's contribution to the "Europe 2020" strategic objectives?

The transport sector might play a crucial role in the EU's "20/20/20" climate and energy goals, but also in what concerns the increase of job offer. To help reducing the carbon emissions by 20%, the TEN-T network must promote railway electrified infrastructure projects that could reduce the air and road transport. Designating efficient freight corridors, developing intermodal centres in strategic areas and new high-speed line projects, can successfully meet the economic demands of the European Union and contribute in reducing carbon emissions and promoting renewable energy sources.

Moreover, the development of an efficient and balanced transport system across the European Union is a conclusive factor of cohesion. The TEN-T network can bring its contribution to that by identifying and promoting new axis that could connect new member states to Western Europe.

In which way can the different sources of EU expenditure be better coordinated and/or combined in order to accelerate the delivery of TEN-T projects and policy objectives?

How can an EU funding strategy coordinate and/or combine the different sources of EU and national funding and public and private financing?

Would the setting up of a European funding framework adequately address the implementation gap in the completion of TEN-T projects and policy objectives?

It is desirable and necessary to create a single financing structure for the TEN-T projects that would contribute to the integration of other transport policy-related components. We appreciate the observation that this framework should provide orientations for national investments based on the EU priorities established within the TEN-T planning and could thus include other financing sources, such

as the revenues coming from transport activities.

Carrying out such significant projects, such as the TEN-T projects, requires high costs that in the end will exceed initial estimations. This is also the consequence of a poor collaboration between responsible institutions, having its roots in the early stages of project evaluation. To that end, we believe it is necessary to establish a fruitful collaboration between all EU institutions, both those in charge of financing and those in charge of technical details, that could clearly define the project characteristics.

Once the TEN-T priorities are being identified, project initiation should be carried out by establishing a structure at EU level to include all agencies and institutions involved. Establishing the technical parameters is closely related to identifying the financing sources and estimating costs, so that all opinions should be considered since the early beginning to avoid higher end costs.

Such a structure should be clearly set for establishing future details and following the project deployment.

To that end, we believe it is necessary to closely monitor the projects which involve new EU member states, such as Romania, where delays in work development, poorly managed tenders or revision of feasibility studies will eventually lead to a significant increase of end costs.

We believe the success of an efficient financing in case of a project relies on three factors: estimation, coordination and monitoring. A realistic and competent first estimation, a well-established coordination between all institutions involved and a close monitoring of work deployment will render costs and investments as efficient as possible.

We believe the financial effort necessary to such major infrastructure projects is fully rewarded by the beneficial effects they bring. The return of these projects is guaranteed by being included in the TEN-T plans, so that the implication of private companies in PPPs is many times desirable.

As for national contributions, especially for new member states, we believe the European institutions should be more involved in identifying and then monitoring the funds that represent these contributions. In Romania, most deadlocks are the result of the Government's incapacity to make available the money which represent the national contribution.

Moreover, even in long-term railway projects, national financings should rely more on the implication of local authorities who are equally interested. For example, until the moment, the Romanian authorities have not considered any Government-local authorities co-financing for financing railway projects.