

Consultation Paper TEN-T Policy Framework: Answers to the questions

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?

As far as the “principles” are concerned, the working document does not tell how they will be used in guiding or determining the choices to be made in designing the TEN-T network. Are they to be seen as necessary conditions? Is there a sort of ranking between them? Would it not be helpful to make at least a distinction between a/ principles that rehearse the obligation for the designation of the TEN-T to respect EU legislation, b/ principles that are directly referring to the EU 2020 objectives and c/principles that are more easily related to internal requirements of a sustainable transport system (e.g. Interconnectivity, interoperability, multi-modality, safety....).

In reference to the “criteria”, it should be noted that – as far as the “supplementary infrastructure measures” are concerned – the EC has failed to set out a set of criteria and standards on which basis those kind of supplementary measures could be identified. This is a major shortcoming. Moreover, we strongly oppose any delegation of powers on this important element in the decision making process, leading to the designation of the core network.

In addition, it should be noted that a new element of the methodology for TEN-T planning such as “the conceptual pillar”, first advanced in the Green Paper and developed further by the expert groups was not mentioned any longer in the consultation document. Will the “conceptual pillar” that according to expert group 1 is meant to *“comprise a methodological tool to allow, on a flexible basis, the inclusion into the network of non-geographical technical or infrastructural attributes to enhance its efficiency of operation, consistent with the objectives of EU transport or other relevant policies such as de-carbonisation, interoperability, safety and security and sustainability.”* [COM(2009)44, final, p.4] still be a part of the methodology of TEN-T planning? As the Commission has recognised the need for clarification of the idea of a conceptual pillar and its role in planning at Community level, it remains all the more unclear why the Commission refrained from doing just that in this second working document. In lack of further clarification of the objectives of the conceptual pillar to be spelled out and uniform criteria to be applied, one can seriously doubt if this “conceptual pillar” will be more than just a “heap of concepts” to be used by any Member State to justify any project according to its own criteria, as was argued by one respondent to the Green Paper document.

Apart from principles and criteria, mentioned in the working document, the working document should set out much more in detail what the real public benefits are of the transport policy to be developed and what are the public needs to be addressed through the realisation of the network. On page 4 of the working document, some “needs” are mentioned. Although it remains rather unclear what is really meant by these “needs”, they seem to refer more to needs of the transport policy towards other objectives, than explaining the public needs that the new transport policy should itself address.

The EC is right to stress the importance of EIA or SEA procedures in the implementation of the TEN-T network. Of course it goes without saying that EU legislation should be respected. The more important consideration however should be how to improve or how to guarantee the quality and rigour of the assessments. The EC could strengthen the support for the TEN-T planning policy by undertaking a strategic environmental impact assessment on the (several scenario's for a) designated network itself. At least this should make possible the critical assessment on an European scale of the overall impact the network could or would have on e.g. the Natura 2000 network, the environmental objectives laid out in the CAFE strategic document, etc... This would also make it clear for everyone that the EC is not only paying lip service when it stresses the importance of compliance to EU legislation and objectives.

In the past, the EC itself recognised the lack of compatibility between the European environmental legislation and the European transport policy as a major issue. Efforts were made to explain

environmental legislation in a way that respects the ambitions of an integrated, sustainable transport policy. The other way around, it also means that environmental aspects should be taken into account in an early stage while developing the future trans-European transport network policy, i.e. while defining the core network of TEN-T. An EIA of this core network is all the more logic since the consultation document indicates that the core network should also provide the basis for the achievement of the EU sustainability and de-carbonisation goals.

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 ?

In developing a more sustainable transport system, the implementation of supplementary infrastructure measures cannot be underestimated. At least, it would confirm the idea that the future transport policy is more than just another word for expanding even further an already dense network of roads and railways. It is also important to stress the fact that optimisation of the core network does also include optimisation of the core nodes themselves. Therefore, we appreciate the Commission's intention that measures such as Onshore Power Supply and LNG facilities will receive support. Another topic however which should receive equal attention in a future-oriented TEN-T policy is how intermodal integration **inside** the core nodes of the core network can be facilitated. In that respect, last mile issues are not restricted to urban nodes but should receive equal attention and acquire proper funding, especially in the ports of the core network where scale benefits are the largest. Unfortunately the working document has disappointingly few things to offer when it comes to setting guidelines and criteria. As was mentioned before, the paper even states that there is no set of criteria and standards yet (cfr. *"the new TEN-T guidelines could define the process or procedures for identifying such criteria and standards"*).

As far as the relationship between the development of the maritime sector, investment in ports and investments in the supporting networks is concerned, we support the European Commission's effort to design an optimal network of European Ports to handle maritime freight flows. At this stage however, the policy implications of the selection process that results out of the methodology proposed by the consortium in terms of funding, prioritising and legitimacy of port infrastructure related projects remain unclear. As for the idea to "cluster" ports through a "multi-ports gateway approach" or anything similar, many questions arise. Ports are closely linked to their hinterland. Ports which can guarantee efficient freight flows to a nearby and well-connected hinterland tend to be successful. When bundling different ports in one cluster or one multi-ports gateway, the question rises how the connection of the different ports within one cluster to their "common" hinterland could be realised without developing new large infrastructure programmes. It can be doubted that building all this new transport infrastructure is the most efficient way of realising the future TEN-T ambitions. We believe that clustering neighbouring ports is only useful if these ports already share, to a large extent, their hinterland and hinterland connections. If not, this approach could lead to suboptimal investments in new infrastructure. Furthermore, it remains unclear what the policy implications will be for the ports being part of a cluster or multi-port region.

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

If the TEN-T planning policy is to boost the transport sector's contribution to the 2020 objectives, then much more stress should be laid on the way the TEN-T planning could support the de-carbonisation of the economy. De-carbonisation of the transport sector remains one of the most important and difficult challenges, with levels of carbon emissions still growing. So, rather than only thinking of ways how TEN-T planning could capture expected transport demand growth in the most efficient and environmentally friendly way (thereby overestimating the potential and the effects of a modal shift), it should also develop scenario's that start from the premise **to reduce** the need of (some) transport. The working document does give examples of possible de-carbonisation projects (e.g. creating short cuts, re-directing transport flows) and measures that would accompany it (internalisation of external costs), but does not develop this idea into a systematic working hypothesis, through all facets of the TEN-T planning approach, let alone have a critical examination of these scenario's, as de-carbonisation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition

for a scenario to be a sustainable solution: for instance creating land-based short cuts might cause other environmental losses that outweigh the benefits in terms of de-carbonisation.

Moreover, the Consultation document lacks a clear support for the water-borne transport. In its "Integrated Maritime Policy" communicated in 2007, the EC however, considering that shipping is still the most energy efficient transport mode, foresees a range of measures to unlock the full potential of Europe's shipping industry. The promotion of water-borne transport, together with efforts to guarantee and enhance the sustainability of shipping (in close cooperation with the IMO), should be reflected in the design of the TEN-T core network.

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?

As the discussions in the expert group 5° have made clear, the current poor consistency and the lack of coordination between the TEN-T budget and the Cohesion policy is likely to hamper the swift and efficient implementation of the TEN-T. The two program's significantly differ in many aspects such as the size of the envelope, the support rate, the applicability or the management, with community funding sources such as ERDF and Cohesion fund being the more important ones. To our opinion, there is even a certain danger that Cohesion funds are being used to realize new infrastructures that would not be supported if considered from the perspective of the TEN-T policy

The main challenge for the Commission will be to prevent these funding sources from co-financing infrastructure that would jeopardize the overall aim to realise an efficient, less carbon intensive, safe and secure transport system. A strict and monitored application of the principles set out in the consultation document (and to be further developed, see remark above) to all allocation of EU funding of infrastructure related projects could be an important part of such an approach.

As far as the funding of projects within the comprehensive network, in relation to the core network is concerned, fragmentation of the budget could be a real problem. Therefore, the Commission should give priority to project proposals within the comprehensive network that are evaluated as being highly supportive to the establishment of the core network.

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

The setting up of an European funding framework, setting out a set of basic criteria to be fulfilled in order to apply for funding through CSF, ERDF or TEN-T budget would be the best way to allocate the financial sources more efficiently. An integrated funding framework based on transparent criteria could avoid the funding of transport projects on the basis of criteria that are not primarily transport-related (through other means than the TEN-T budget).

Furthermore, if guidelines on port state aid or coordination of transport should eventually be put forward by the Commission, the objective of improving consistency in funding priorities between the EU and national levels in conformity with the revised TEN-T guidelines should be an important underlying concern of the Commission.

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

The creation of an European funding framework requires the development of fair, transparent and efficient criteria to identify and prioritize the projects to be supported, depending on the European added value of the project. The Commission should now refine those criteria and explain more in detail how they interrelate. Furthermore the Commission should substantiate these criteria with concrete targets and indicators to measure progress and performance and present the results of this work in a new consultation document.