



FEPORT is the European representation of maritime terminals and stevedores. FEPORT's members are responsible for moving maritime cargo from the maritime leg to the land connections for further transport. FEPORT is convinced that the TEN-T policy contributes to the optimal alignment of infrastructure and market needs, which in the end enables terminal operators to deliver an efficient and effective service to shipping lines and shippers. Moreover, significant private investments on behalf of terminal operators already nowadays complement public efforts when linking up the European ports with national and trans-European networks.

On April 30th FEPORT has replied to the questions put forward in the 2009 Green Paper on the future TEN-T policy. FEPORT notes that the Commission has considered several FEPORT comments of sufficient relevance to include in its next Working Document on the matter.

The current submission replies to the Consultation on the future trans-European transport network policy. The comments elaborate on previously risen matters and reply to still outstanding questions.

Consultation

Section 1 (chapter 1 -3) : Methodology and planning

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?

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?

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

TEN-T networks

The proposed future TEN-T structure distinguishes between a comprehensive and a core network. The comprehensive network comprises all connections necessary to enhance European welfare and well-being. Within the comprehensive network, the core network establishes a selection of infrastructure of highest EU relevance. In the core network the contribution to EU objectives is most pronounced and EU funding can be concentrated on a limited number of 'high-yield' projects.

FEPORT: the core network should concentrate on links between major production and consumption centres, while not neglecting issues such as integration and cohesion. The network should also continue to emphasize the necessary complementarity between transport needs and environmental protection.

Core network and maritime ports

Maritime ports are nearly always international in nature, importing or exporting cargo from and to extra or intra EU destinations. Globalization has further enhanced this trend, transforming ports into the main exchange platforms providing Member States access to global production and consumption markets. Clearly the role of ports in the Member States' import and export flows cannot be overestimated.

Ports are important generators of welfare, employment and development for their region and country. Moreover, in many ports effects disseminate across national borders, contributing to the economies of neighbouring or more distant Member States. Effects can be divided in two categories: the handling and transport services as such on the one hand and the product/service provision to industry and consumption on the other hand.

Maritime ports are by definition intermodal in nature, relating international shipping with land based modes and short sea shipping. Dependent on the access possibilities to the national or European networks, this multimodal potential can be extended beyond the immediate landside region. In this context, it should also be recognised that an increasing relationship between sea and inland ports is clearly evolving.

Maritime ports are highly diverse in nature. Large, medium and small-sized ports may be identified. The overall volume however does not clarify the role of a specific port. Whereas the importance of a large port is clear, the role of many smaller ports may be very well pronounced in so-called niche markets. For instance the largest cereal, fish, wind-mill, liquefied gas, wood, unaccompanied ro-ro etc. ports are not among the European top 20 of ports. Moreover, even within a single trade, such as containers, the role and needs of destination and transshipment ports are highly different.

FEPORT: In view of the importance of ports to the European economies, it is essential that the core network ensures an optimal connection with the European maritime ports. The core network has to accommodate a maximal connection between rail, road and waterborne land networks and the sea leg linking up with destinations both inside and outside the EU. The facilitating role for European economies, the employment and welfare generation and the multimodal character of ports strongly align with the needs and objectives of current EU policy.

However, the essential role of ports towards the core network should not lead to unnecessarily prioritizing ports themselves. Many ports play a non-interchangeable role to local EU economies, irrespective of their sheer size. Moreover, the diversity of traffic types or passenger flows also implies that quite often smaller or medium-sized ports excel in particular 'niche' trades. Competition between ports enhances the efficiency of ports, but also implies that some trades shift between competing ports. It is therefore recommended to rather assess port projects on their specific value to the core network instead of prioritizing single ports. Whereas this requires a more elaborate assessment, the impact will no doubt outweigh the effort. A successful assessment would hereby include three elements:

- European contribution
A core port project should in the first place remove critical bottlenecks or enhance necessary links between the port and the core network in line with current and future trade demands. Meanwhile it should also enhance the current and future network by means of further ICT and coordination developments. Clearly, all of this should be assessed against the background of the overall European objectives of environmental performance, connectivity, economic development, integration, fundability, available infrastructure, cohesion, etc.
- Market relevance
A TEN-T connection requires a commercially viable and sufficiently stable traffic flow. Next to the flow itself, the assessment should also incorporate considerations on pressure from alternatives, the already available infrastructure on proposed segments and the availability of timely and consistent funding.
- Funding impact
The impact of funding on competing projects should be closely assessed, especially where this may be limited by legal restrictions.

In the case of ports, with their lengthy international logistic chains, it should also be pointed out that bottlenecks may arise far away from the actual port. For this reason, it is essential that when linking up ports with the priority network a logistics point of view should be adopted, in which the logistics core network has to be made optimally accessible to the ports contributing to the trade flows entering the network or being exchanged intra-EU between different segments of the network. Current market-based logistic solutions should hereby not be discarded, but rather encouraged.

Conclusion: According to the above arguments, it would be counterproductive to define a limited list of 'priority ports'. Such option would undermine the normal commercial competitive pressure, while reducing the potential of interesting port projects enhancing the connectivity of the core network with the European coasts.

It is therefore suggested to overall recognize ports as external starting points of the core network and next rather assess the relevance of single port projects according to pre-listed criteria. A pre-prioritizing of ports would be discouraged in such a strategy, as it would contribute neither to infrastructural, nor market-driven objectives.

Certainly a more detailed list of assessment criteria can be established, undertaking to which FEPOR kindly offers its assistance to define criteria for market relevance. The concept of multi-criteria analysis, as previously forwarded by FEPOR, should anyhow be the basis for the required assessment of port projects.

Section 2 (chapter 4) : Non-financial instruments and funding

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?

In view of the financial requirements of a TEN -T core network and its appropriate integration into the comprehensive network funding clearly remains a key issue. Coordination of funding priorities between national and EU levels and combination of funding sources within the EU framework is instrumental to the success of any TEN -T policy. The addition of private co-funding would certainly be highly beneficial, but will no doubt add conditions, such as timing reliability, spending consistency and possibly co-decision aspects.

FEPOR: As indicated in the previous FEPOR submission, in order to streamline funding effects, it is important to consolidate the planning phase. During this phase all commitments should be assessed and fixed, resulting in the necessary administrative authorizations, environmental permits, financial allocations and contractual agreements to launch the project in the best conditions. To the extent that expenditure is not only budgeted, but also allocated, the consolidated timing will also result in reliable project execution. Moreover, cases of public - private co-financing demonstrate that reliability, transparency and the combination of both are equally important conditions as financial or economic return on a private co -investment.

Market relevance of a project delivers the necessary feasibility and fundability of a project. To find sustainable financing, it is therefore important to determine the appropriate balance between the structuring role of infrastructure and the demand for such infrastructure. Distortions between both inevitably lead to underperformance or incompatibilities of demand and offer.

Section 3 (chapter 5) : Legal and institutional framework

In which way can the TEN -T policy benefit from the new legal instruments and provisions as set above?

The instruments outlined by the Commission are all relevant in defining a transparent structure for a future TEN-T policy structure.

FREPORT: However, whereas the order in the Commission Working Paper may be coincidental, FREPORT would rather suggest following sequence:

- An addition to the Treaty basis provided for in Article 172 TFEU on TENs and Art . 100 TFEU governing the Common transport policy to be specified on the final content of the TEN-T Guidelines. – legal basis
- A new Regulation as the common legal act for the Guidelines and the granting for Community financial aid. – financial basis
- The combination of TEN -T Guidelines and the TEN Financial Regulation, both of which are based on Article 171 TFEU – financial implementation
- A clarification of the responsibilities of Member States in different stages of TEN -T projects (planning, financing, implementation and review) - coordination basis
- A precise definition of objectives and related of the power delegated to the Commission in order to respond to certain developments over time and meet the flexibility objective - amendment basis

Conclusion:

The importance of maritime ports to the European TEN -T network cannot be underestimated. Through the ports imports and exports enter the European economies; multimodal logistic networks spark from the maritime ports, employment and welfare generation is clearly linked to port development. For these reasons an optimal link of the ports with the TEN-T core network is essential. Most trade and passenger flows originate in Europe's ports. The versatility and diversity of European ports however suggests not to prioritize the ports themselves, but rather to assess the quality of the projects emanating from their development. A useful list of assessment criteria can easily be developed against the background of access to the core network. These criteria should focus on the market relevance of future infrastructure developments whereas these should comply with market needs and not counteract well-established competitive logistic solutions.