

Transport

Priority transport network by 31 December 2030

By Isabelle Smets | Tuesday 20 September 2011

Some 82 seaports, 37 airports, 46 border crossing points with non-EU states and 82 urban areas will be considered as priority infrastructure or zones in the future Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and will form its backbone. The list is contained in a draft regulation to be presented by the European Commission on 19 October ⁽¹⁾, along with the proposal establishing the future infrastructure fund announced in the draft budgetary framework 2014-2020 last 29 June ('instrument for interconnection in Europe').

The proposal confirms the dualistic approach defended since last year by the Commission – and widely accepted by stakeholders – for developing the European transport network, based on a comprehensive network plus a core network composed of priority infrastructure within the larger network. According to the proposal, the comprehensive network should be in place by 31 December 2050 and the priority network by 31 December 2030, confirming the dates suggested in the white paper on transport.

The proposal lays down criteria for determining the infrastructure and routes that will be included in the comprehensive and core networks. To be part of the basic network, seaports – handling freight and passengers – will have to register a volume of traffic greater than one per thousand of EU maritime traffic (based on the last three years of available statistics). Ports situated in islands and very remote regions will also be included under certain conditions. The threshold for passenger traffic is the same for airports: one per thousand of overall EU passenger traffic (which roughly would encompass airports with around 800,000 annual passenger movements per year). For freight, airports with a volume of traffic greater than two per thousand of EU traffic will be included. Inland ports will have to handle at least 500,000 tonnes of freight per year.

WHO WILL BE IN CORE NETWORK?

The core network will include the most important connections and multimodal 'nodes' – where different modes of transport meet and connect – of the TEN-T. Who will be part of it and who will not? The stakes are important because EU funding will be allocated on a priority basis – though not exclusively – to infrastructure that forms part of the core network. Over and above their strategic importance, these connections and infrastructure will have to meet specific requirements, for example, the existence of rest areas every 50 kilometres on road infrastructure, full electrification of railway lines or the availability of alternative fuels.

The backbone of this core network is made up of 37 airports, 82 seaports, 46 road or rail border crossing points with non-EU states and 82 urban nodes (in essence, the capital of each member state plus large metropolitan areas) listed in the annexes to the proposal. The seaports listed will have to be connected to rail and road infrastructure in the TEN-T by 31 December 2030, while airports will have until 2050. Where possible, airports will have to be integrated into the high-speed train network.

The core network will be put in place by means of corridors, of which a preliminary list is included in the Commission's budget proposals for 2014-2020. The Commission emulates here what is being done with rail freight corridors, in order to encourage the coordinated development of major transport axes. These corridors will in principle cover at least three modes of transport – and except where a derogation is granted, will include at least one seaport – and must cross at least three member states. Each member state will be involved in at least one corridor. It will have to notify to the Commission, with the other states involved, a multiannual development plan and financial plan for the corridors in which it is a stakeholder. The Commission will appoint a European coordinator for each corridor.

The text does not address the financial dimension, which is left to the future infrastructure fund proposal. The Commission proposes to invest €21.7 billion of the €40 billion overall allocation for this fund to transport infrastructure, plus €10 billion from regional policy via the Cohesion Fund.

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⁽¹⁾ *The draft is available at www.europolitics.info > Search = 299936*

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