



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Poslanecká sněmovna for its Opinion on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Connecting Europe Facility {COM(2011) 665 final} and apologizes for the delay in replying.

The Commission agrees with the Poslanecká sněmovna on the importance of establishing an efficient and modern infrastructure network. Such a network is crucial for the smooth functioning of the internal market, the harnessing of its potential, and the strengthening of the EU competitiveness and energy security.

Specific attention is to be given to the funding of infrastructure in the Cohesion Member States. In this respect, the Commission regrets that the Poslanecká sněmovna does not support the proposed transfer of € 10 billion from the Cohesion Fund in the new instrument.

The Commission is indeed convinced that the ring-fencing mechanism of the €10bn from the Cohesion Fund can be an efficient way to guarantee higher co-funding rates for Cohesion Member States, while ensuring at the same time the necessary focus on projects of high EU added value.

The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) complements the cohesion policy on cross-border and challenging projects such as rail and inland waterways infrastructure, where past experience has shown that the decentralised management of the Structural and Cohesion Funds will not deliver. The Commission would also like to stress that Member States will need to ensure an appropriate balance between investments in trans-European networks and environment, according to their specific investment and infrastructure needs.

Siiim Kallas, Vice-President of the Commission, in charge of transport, was in Prague on 20 March 2012 to discuss these issues with representatives of Cohesion Member States, explaining that the Connecting Europe Facility would be to the benefit of all Member States. The objective of the Commission is to build a trans-European network in all Member States, including in all Cohesion Member States, in order to provide equal access for all European citizens and enterprises to the internal market, and thus contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion.

I look forward to continuing our political dialogue on these important issues.

Yours faithfully,

Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President

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