

panorama

inforegio

38

Summer 2011



Connecting Europe

Transport and regional policy

EDITORIAL

Dirk Ahner

3

OVERVIEW

A competitive and sustainable transport system for Europe

4-7

INTERVIEWS

Matthias Ruete – Luis Valente de Oliveira – Jean-Marc Offner – Horst Sauer

8-11

THE TEN-T POLICY

A multimodal transport network for Europe

12-13

THE ROAD AHEAD FOR CLEANER, GREENER TRANSPORT

AROUND EUROPE

Forging better links with South East Europe

Scandria – bringing the Baltic closer to the Adriatic

Portugal – Vessel Traffic System is the new smart system for shipping control

Sofia metro extension breathes new life into the heart of the city

New facilities at La Rochelle Port to meet a growing market

Delivering a better motorway in Slovenia

Line upgrade with international benefits – Czech Republic

14-15

16-22

23

URBAN TRANSPORT

Rethinking urban mobility: the Active Travel Network

24-25

HOW TRANSPORT LINKS ARE SHAPING THE EU

26

REGIO MATTERS

Results of the public consultation on the Fifth Cohesion Report

27

DIARY DATES

28

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

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Transport is much more than just getting from one place to another: it is about the networks supported and developed by EU funds helping to shape economic growth, sustainability and access to vital services. In this edition of Panorama, we take a look at the whole picture from high-speed rail linking one country to another, to environmentally friendly urban transport systems.

Actions at EU level have contributed decisively to the positive achievements in the European transport system over the last ten years. The Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund have historically been a major source of finance for improved transport links in lagging regions across the EU. The recent Baltic Sea and Danube macro-regional strategies offer new vehicles for connecting transport developments across borders.

Looking to the future, the recently published White Paper on Transport, a Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area, announces a sizeable package of new policy initiatives. The aim? A more competitive and integrated transport system providing increased mobility and lowering emissions by 2050. The initiatives cover 40 different areas necessary for the transformation of Europe's transport system and address challenges such as reducing our dependence on oil, tackling congestion and improving infrastructure.

This edition's interviewees provide their insights on lessons learned, the challenges to come and how economic and territorial cohesion can be boosted by an effective transport policy. Insights into the last round of evaluation of regional policy show what has been achieved so far and what still needs to be done to improve the EU's transport networks. To see what countries are doing on the ground, Around Europe talks to seven projects covering a wide variety of transport modes.

With its emphasis on integrated approaches to the challenges faced by particular regions, regional policy can support the precise needs faced by communities on their territories. What is clear is that the regional response to the challenge of how transport can best further cohesion, drive growth and become more sustainable will be key to achieving the White Paper's objectives.

Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dirk Ahner'.

Dirk Ahner

*Director-General
Directorate-General for Regional Policy
European Commission*

A COMPETITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SYSTEM FOR EUROPE

Transport – a driver for growth, an environmental challenge, an international issue. The 2011 White Paper – Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area, adopted by the European Commission on 28 March 2011, aims to balance these factors and ensure that Europe’s regions remain fully and competitively integrated in the global economy. Concrete actions are set out, alongside analysis of what has been done so far and the challenges to come. These proposals are particularly important for Europe’s regions and the EU’s regional policy, as sustainable transport infrastructure boosts connections and benefits the internal market.

Other world regions are launching huge, ambitious transport modernisation and infrastructure investment programmes; it is crucial that European transport continues to develop and invest to maintain its competitive position.

Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – White Paper on competitive and sustainable transport

One of the key challenges is aligning a comprehensive transport system with the Commission’s declared undertaking to cut greenhouse gas emissions – overall the EU needs to reduce emissions by 80-95% below 1990 levels by 2050. Sixty percent of the reduction has to come from the transport sector. Although transport has become cleaner, there is more traffic than ever and 96% of the energy used is still derived from fossil fuels. Delayed action or timid moves towards adopting newer technologies will condemn the EU to lagging behind those who embrace innovation.

While a clear emphasis is being placed on technological innovation leading to cleaner, smarter infrastructures and systems, capacity-building to help people implement such innovation is also high on the agenda.

Increase mobility – lower emissions

There’s no doubt that transport infrastructure investments boost economic growth and enhance trade and the creation of wealth. Without effective networks, residents of more remote regions or geographically challenged pockets risk being cut off from services and jobs.

To balance what can be seen as conflicting demands, the Roadmap identifies ways to curb the transport system’s dependence on oil without compromising efficiency or mobility, including:

- Improving the energy efficiency of current vehicle types across all types, or modes, of transport;
- Developing and putting into place new, sustainable fuels and propulsion systems;
- Optimising the performance of multimodal logistics chains, focusing on making them more energy efficient, for example, better links between rail and shipping options for long-distance freight;
- Using innovative traffic management systems and market measures such as abolishing existing barriers to short-sea shipping.



A Roadmap for action

Over the last 10 years, air, road and to some degree, rail, have all opened up to the market, and safety across the board has been improved. The Single European Sky, coordinating the design and management of air space, has also taken off. Passengers now have legal rights, and new rules on working conditions for those in the sector have also been adopted.

Trans-European Transport Networks, TEN-T, have contributed to territorial cohesion, not least through the programme's boost to high-speed rail links. Finally, a lot of emphasis has been placed on improving transport's environmental performance.

Within the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy, the further development of Europe's transport infrastructure network should be geared towards the emergence of a resource-efficient transport system that builds on innovation and addresses climate change and environmental challenges, as well as territorial cohesion.

To get Europe moving in a way that matches the needs of this new decade, and those to come, the 2011 White Paper lists actions to be taken which build on past achievements. Here are some of the ideas put forward:

An efficient and integrated mobility system

- A Single European Transport Area
- Promoting quality jobs and working conditions
- Secure transport
- Acting on transport safety: saving thousands of lives
- Service quality and reliability

Innovating for the future: technology and behaviour

- A European Transport Research and Innovation Policy
- Promoting more sustainable behaviour
- Integrated urban mobility

Modern infrastructure and smart funding

- Transport infrastructure: territorial cohesion and economic growth
- A coherent funding framework
- Getting prices right and avoiding distortions

The external dimension

- Promoting international climate change goals and energy efficiency
- Developing a cooperation framework to extend our transport and infrastructure policy with our neighbours



Electric vehicles represent a key way of meeting emissions targets.

A COMPETITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SYSTEM FOR EUROPE

Effective transport networks boost territorial cohesion

Actions at EU level have contributed decisively to the positive achievements in the European transport system over the last 10 years. The Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund have historically been a major source of finance for the investment needed to improve transport links in lagging regions across the EU.

Cohesion policy actively encourages regional and national actions on transport priorities and cross-border cooperation. The recent macro-regional strategies – the Danube Strategy and the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – provide strengthened frameworks for cross-border planning and offer potential for integrated transport development.

The impact of the economic crisis still reverberates across the EU – rising unemployment and reduced public expenditure means the need for cost-effective mobility is greater than ever, while the means to ensure that mobility are shrinking. More has to be achieved with less. Existing, proven systems like cohesion policy are ideally placed to improve the quality of a variety of actions taken across different regions and countries, such as the support for the European rail industry.

The European rail industry

“When the works for the first Spanish high-speed rail line started in 1986, Spain was one of the poorest countries in the European Union, and Andalusia was one of the poorest Spanish regions. However, the Spanish government decided to build a brand new high-speed rail link between its capital, Madrid, and the region’s main city, Seville, using the best existing technology. Since then, the country has undergone dramatic growth, and Andalusia has become a much more competitive region than in the past. This development would never have been possible without the existence of cohesion policy and the territorial effect the policy has.”

What is TEN-T?

The Trans-European Transport Network, TEN-T, is the basis for the flow of goods and the means for people to move freely throughout the European Union. It is a key policy, bringing the western and eastern parts of the EU together and shaping the future Single European Transport Area.

Increased integration in the light of a bigger internal market, decarbonisation of transport, the EU’s role in the global fight against climate change – these challenges all demanded a review of the policy which was launched in 2009.

TEN-T is supported by the EU through the TEN-T programme and the European Regional Development and Cohesion Funds, since improved accessibility is fundamental to securing a competitive, cohesive Europe.

What is covered?

Overall, the EU contribution to transport, for the programming period 2007-13, includes:

- TEN-T, national, regional and local roads representing more than €41 billion;
- Rail including TEN-T and other projects representing around €24 billion;
- Urban transport – €8.1 billion;
- Ports and inland waterways – €4.3 billion;
- Multimodal transport and intelligent systems – more than €3 billion;
- Airports – €1.84 billion.

Beyond TEN-T

TEN-T currently receives approximately half of cohesion policy’s transport allocations. The other priorities include national, regional and local networks and clean urban transport. How best to share future allocations will be a hot topic. It is clear that the pressure to decarbonise transport systems and focus EU support on investments that make a clear contribution to common priorities will mean more emphasis on infrastructure bottlenecks, intelligent networks and clean urban public transport.



Urban transport

Cities are the growth-engines in their wider surroundings. They provide services, work and leisure activities to their regions. It is vital that the urban transport system is fully integrated into the transport services of the wider region. However, cities suffer most from congestion and air and noise pollution. A quarter of CO₂ emissions in the transport sector as a whole, come from town and city driving, while 69% of accidents occur in cities. A gradual phasing-out of 'conventional' vehicles in our cities will be needed if we are to meet our targets for greenhouse gas emissions and reduce our dependence on oil.

More people using collective forms of transport will create a virtuous circle for public transport, which, combined with work to make cycling and walking enjoyable and safe, will get people out of their cars.

People who are car dependent will be encouraged to use smaller, lighter, more specialised vehicles. Large fleets of buses and taxis, smaller, cleaner trucks and delivery vans – all are ideally placed to herald in alternative propulsion methods and fuels, providing a test bed for innovation. Public transport can be encouraged by road pricing and transparent taxation systems and the introduction of new technologies.



Action cannot be delayed. Infrastructure takes many years to plan, build and equip – and trains, planes and ships last for decades – the choices we make today will determine transport in 2050.

We need to act on a European level to ensure the transformation of transport is defined together with our partners rather than determined elsewhere in the world.

Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – White Paper on competitive and sustainable transport

MATTHIAS RUETE

Interview with Director-General for Transport and Mobility, Matthias Ruete

Prior to 2010, when he took over his position at Transport and Mobility, Matthias Ruete was Director-General of the combined Energy and Transport Directorate at the European Commission.

What are the main lessons of the past and looking toward 2020, what are the main future challenges in the transport sector?

Our great challenge is to help transport address future constraints without sacrificing its efficiency and while maintaining and, indeed, enhancing the competitiveness of the sector.

In the past decade, Europe has achieved a lot. We have opened markets in air, road and partially in rail transport and have succeeded in increasing the safety and security of transport across all modes. But the system is not sustainable. Neglecting or underestimating future constraints and postponing necessary changes would be a fatal mistake.

Oil dependence, congestion and cutting greenhouse gas emissions are immediate challenges, the last being the most significant. We have committed ourselves to reducing emissions by 80% by 2050. Transport will need to cut its emissions by at least 60% with respect to 1990 (70% less than today). The White Paper adopted by the Commission on 28 March reflects upon these challenges and sets the strategy that will enable the Union to effectively tackle them.

In your view, how can EU transport policy contribute to economic and territorial cohesion?

The White Paper proposes the development of a 'core' trans-European network of corridors, carrying large and consolidated volumes of freight and passenger traffic with high efficiency and low emissions, spanning the entire continent.

This will ensure efficient multimodal links between the EU capitals and other main cities, economic centres, ports, airports and key land border crossings. It will represent the backbone of the 'Single European Transport Area' and will strengthen the cohesion between all regions.

What are the main elements of the EU strategy for the future development of the transport system proposed in the White Paper?

The four main steps are:

- A Single European Transport Area to ease the movements of citizens and freight, reduce costs and enhance the sustainability of European transport;
- Better links between the development of technological innovation and its deployment through an integrated research policy;
- Planning infrastructure to maximise growth and minimise environmental impact; and
- Developing infrastructural links with neighbouring countries to open up third-country markets in transport services, products and investments to support trade development.



“ Our great challenge is to help transport address future constraints without sacrificing its efficiency. ”

LUIS VALENTE DE OLIVEIRA

European Coordinator for Motorways of the Sea

Luis Valente de Oliveira has so far met more than 400 stakeholders throughout the maritime EU countries and presented three annual activity reports.

What are the main lessons of the past and looking toward 2020, what are the main future challenges in the transport sector?

The greatest challenge is the coordination between different modes of transportation – the essence of the problem is how to transport goods from one place to another in the quickest, most economical, most comfortable and least-polluting way. If we consider only one given mode, the range of answers is either rigid in terms of function or non-rational in terms of cost. To provide answers, we need to know the characteristics of each mode, and multimodal solutions must be the rule.

In your view, how can EU transport policy contribute to economic and territorial cohesion?

The level of activity of a given region is essential to assuring the well-being of its inhabitants: production and consumption require transportation. To foster development and cohesion, linkages between complementary regions need to be strengthened.

More than 90% of EU imports and exports are shipped to and from European ports. Providing the best possible ports and the most suitable connections between them and their interiors is therefore an important first step.

Certain modes require a threshold of freight to become economical, so choices have to be viable. The concentration of freight in certain axes can make connections economically sustainable. It is necessary to keep cost and time to a minimum, which can only be achieved by combining and extracting the best out of each mode. EU transport policy must address all modes of transportation, making it more coherent and efficient.

What are the main lessons you have learned from your experience as a TEN-T European Coordinator for a Priority Project?

The Priority Project Motorways of the Sea is now fully underway: the eight recently approved projects cover the European maritime space. They are the result of ideas discussed with people from all over Europe.

Having several countries involved in a project is a good way to share best practice and the results of studies. Group exchanges result in the generation of adaptable solutions.

I have insisted upon the reinforcement of training programmes on logistics, both for staff and for those responsible, within the enterprises, for the movement of freight to meet the demands of the complex logistics we face.



“ More than 90% of EU imports and exports are shipped to and from European ports. ”

JEAN-MARC OFFNER

Director-General of the urban planning office of Bordeaux Métropole Aquitaine

Urban planning engineer and political analyst, Jean-Marc Offner is Director-General of the urban planning office of Bordeaux Métropole Aquitaine, l'a-urba.

What are the main lessons of the past and looking toward 2020, what are the main future challenges in the transport sector?

The reduction of road, urban and interurban road traffic has been one of the major objectives of public transport policy in many EU countries for several decades.

Public transport has not succeeded in curbing the increase in traffic and one of the main challenges for the transport sector by 2020 will be to implement a public transport service suited to evolving lifestyles: more flexible schedules, convenient and high-quality services, and the utility of transport time.

In your view, how can EU transport policy contribute to economic and territorial cohesion?

For some decades the development of high-speed networks has been the tool of choice for bringing European territories on different sides of the border closer together, promoting a certain social and economic cohesion. These efforts should be continued.

It is equally important not to forget investments at the regional level which are essential to ensure that metropolitan areas function well. Public authorities and network managers have often been criticised for neglecting regional infrastructure in favour of more profitable high-speed lines. We feel that both levels are essential.



Given the environmental challenges, we need a good compromise between the ambition of creating networks that cover all the different areas and the need to regulate traffic flows.

What role do you envisage for transport in integrated urban development?

Increased coordination between transport and urban planning policy is also needed. More compact conurbations are preferable because they facilitate short journeys. A land policy that makes it possible to set aside ground, to anticipate the increase in value associated with new infrastructure and to build social housing could be a solution.

It should be obligatory to increase the density of services over and above certain minimum levels in those areas that are best served by public transport, at the same time as implementing restrictive parking policies.

We have to make existing urban organisations function more sustainably. In particular, we must consider new ways of using cars: carpooling, car sharing, and integrating cars with public transport. From the environmental point of view, multiplying the occupancy rate of cars and dividing journey lengths by two would equal the value of all the public transport development policies!

“ The reduction of road, urban and interurban road traffic has been one of the major objectives of public transport policy in many EU countries for several decades. ”

HORST SAUER

Head of European Affairs Division, Joint Spatial Planning Department, Berlin-Brandenburg

As Head of the European Spatial Development Division of the Joint Spatial Planning Department, Horst Sauer is responsible for integrating the Berlin-Brandenburg Capital Region into the spatial development of the EU. He currently focuses on the regional impact of TEN-T networks, particularly in the region between Scandinavia and the Adriatic Sea.

What are the main lessons of the past and looking toward 2020, what are the main future challenges in the transport sector?

It became more and more evident that new infrastructure could only be realised when the regional economic benefit was obvious. We are working together with more than 30 partners to bring forward the Scandria corridor connecting Scandinavia to the Adriatic via Berlin. Our aim is to better link innovative centres with capital regions along this corridor. There is an enormous potential for regional growth in this part of Europe. We mainly focus on optimised use of existing infrastructure and greening transport with regard to emissions rather than on requesting new major infrastructure investments.



In your view, how can EU transport policy contribute to economic and territorial cohesion?

The upcoming core network as the backbone of EU transport policy is based on connecting main nodes. These nodes, like the German capital region Berlin-Brandenburg, should consist of all modes of transport and be connected to the other hubs like ports or strong economic centres.

Better accessibility in Central Europe will lead to more economic activities here and thereby contribute to territorial cohesion. A strong core network will also serve those regions which are well connected to the main routes of transport.

How would you define a good governance system when planning transport infrastructures?

From my point of view, regional planning / regional policy have to be closely connected to transport planning. Transport is not an 'end in itself' but should serve the needs of people and businesses.

We in Berlin-Brandenburg have had very positive experiences not only in 'cross border' planning – covering both the city of Berlin and the surrounding state of Brandenburg – but also in harmonising spatial planning and transport planning. This is even more valid for public transport services which have been organised in a coordinated manner for more than a decade by Verkehrsverbund Berlin Brandenburg (VBB).

“Transport is not an 'end in itself' but should serve the needs of people and businesses.”

A MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT NETWORK FOR EUROPE

The European Union has been championing the cause of a Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) since the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. TEN-T supports the development of the EU internal market, reinforces economic and social cohesion and links islands and landlocked and peripheral regions with the central regions of the Union. It will also bring the EU closer to its neighbours and world markets.

The first Guidelines to support Member States in developing the TEN-T were adopted in 1996, through a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council. These Guidelines were then substantially revised and updated following the 2004 enlargement.

Total TEN-T investment to date (1996-2013)	c. €800 billion
EU funding sources to date*	c. €230 billion
Future investment needs (up to 2020)	c. €550 billion

*TEN-T Programme, Cohesion Fund, ERDF, EIB loans & credit guarantees

Some notable success stories already feature in the TEN-T policy framework, such as the high-speed railway axis Paris-Brussels-Köln-Amsterdam-London or the Øresund rail and road link between Denmark and Sweden. Then there is the Madrid-Barcelona high-speed rail link, the Malpensa Airport in Milano, the Cork-Dublin-Belfast-Larne-Stranraer rail link and many other ongoing projects.

Fine-tuning for the future

Drawing on the experience of the past fifteen years, the European Commission undertook a comprehensive review of the TEN-T policy and proposed new Guidelines for planning and implementation. These new Guidelines, due to be considered for adoption by the European Parliament and the Council starting with the second half of 2011, bring forward a substantially revised policy approach, which builds on strengths, aims to remedy identified shortcomings and takes up new challenges.

So far, TEN-T development has been based on a gradual identification and implementation of Priority Projects by individual Member States, in a bottom-up, piecemeal approach. This approach has helped identify and develop important projects throughout the TEN-T, as exemplified earlier, but has not in itself delivered a fully integrated, multimodal, trans-European network.

Two complementary networks

The new planning framework will consist of two layers: a comprehensive network, as the basic layer, and a core network, overlaying the comprehensive network and constituted of the strategically most important parts of the TEN-T.

The comprehensive network will result from an updating and adjustment of the current TEN-T and include the relevant existing and planned infrastructure in the Member States. The core network will be formed of those parts of the TEN-T that carry the main concentration of transnational traffic flows for both freight and passengers and that ensure the effective linking of the eastern and western parts of the Union and of its peripheral regions to the central ones.

The two networks together will form the infrastructural basis of a Single European Transport Area, providing efficient multimodal links between EU capitals and with the main EU economic centres and border entry points into the European transport system.

Coordinated planning and development

The new TEN-T policy will primarily make network planning and development at European level more coordinated. It will rely on a coherent and transparent European planning methodology overseen by the Commission and developed following a broad stakeholder consultation.



Coordinated implementation

Secondly, the implementation of the new TEN-T policy will be more coordinated. A number of corridors, drawing on the core network, will be identified and developed in line with evolving capacity needs. Overall Corridor implementation will be placed under the aegis of a European Coordinator, while multi-annual Corridor Development Plans will identify, within defined timetables, the major investments needed and smaller scale, short-term improvements.

Finally, the new policy approach will place greater emphasis on the conditionality and coordination of EU financial involvement. Co-financing of projects will be conditional upon their addressing missing links and bottlenecks on the identified core network and ensuring effective co-modality, while priority will be given to those projects that bring most European added value (e.g. completing cross-border links). At the same time, an integrated funding framework for transport will ensure better coordination of the Cohesion and Structural Funds with the TEN-T policy objectives, leveraging the speed and effectiveness of their implementation.



Ensuring multi modality is vital for industrial regions.



THE ROAD AHEAD FOR **CLEANER, GREENER** TRANSPORT

Resource efficiency and sustainability must be central to European Union transport policy, according to both the Europe 2020 strategy for economic growth and a recently published Commission White Paper on Transport. The ‘decarbonisation’ of transport – which will mean dramatically reducing the sector’s greenhouse gas emissions – has therefore become a top priority for Europe’s economic and environmental agendas.

Europe 2020 sets out the EU’s economic strategy for the coming decade. It focuses on encouraging smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The objective is to build a low-carbon economy based on knowledge and innovation, which uses resources more efficiently while delivering social and territorial cohesion.

The transport sector is vital to Europe’s economic future and so has a key role to play if Europe 2020 is to deliver on its goals. In January 2011 the Commission launched ‘A Resource-Efficient Europe’, which is one of Europe 2020’s flagship initiatives. It makes clear that resource efficiency must be the guiding principle of EU transport policy.

Sustainable solutions

Making transport more efficient in order to secure Europe’s future prosperity is also a key theme in the new White Paper, ‘Roadmap to a Single Transport Area’, which was adopted by the Commission on 28 March 2011.

The White Paper presents a vision for a competitive, resource-efficient and sustainable transport system in Europe. Clean urban transport is given a high priority by the paper, as is decarbonisation.

Transport must become more sustainable in the light of new and growing challenges. Firstly, oil will become scarcer and more expensive in the coming decades as it is sourced from increasingly uncertain supplies.

Secondly, in order to reach the goal of limiting climate change to below 2°C, the EU must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% below 1990 levels by 2050. The transport sector will therefore be required to make a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 60%.

Cutting the carbon

The problem is that transport represents a significant and growing source of greenhouse gas emissions. That is why decarbonisation is a major theme in the White Paper.

Sustainable fuels and green vehicles must be developed and brought to market if Europe is to improve the energy efficiency performance of all vehicles. Europe must gradually substitute fossil energy sources that generate CO₂ with more environment-friendly alternatives.



Laukaantie Road – road construction – Jyväskylä, Finland. Construction of cycle & pedestrian underpass.



To this end, the Commission intends to develop an alternative fuels strategy which will lead Europe's transport sector away from its reliance on oil and ultimately towards complete decarbonisation.

When it comes to meeting the EU's greenhouse gas reduction targets, the Commission is focusing a lot of attention on urban transport. Many of Europe's towns and cities suffer from congestion and have to put up with poor air quality and noise. The cars, trucks and buses that move around Europe's urban areas are responsible for about a quarter of the transport sector's CO₂ emissions.

The Commission wants to see the gradual phasing out of conventionally fuelled vehicles from cities – the aim is a 50% reduction by 2030 moving to 100% by 2050. This would significantly reduce Europe's dependence on oil and help achieve the transport sector's goal of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

The use of smaller and lighter road passenger vehicles should be encouraged. At the same time, greater efforts must be made to equip city-centre buses, taxis and delivery vans with alternative fuels and engines in order to cut pollution and emissions caused by urban transport.

Integrated approaches

The Commission would also like to see urban logistics that can achieve near-zero greenhouse gas emissions deployed in major cities by 2030. By harnessing intelligent transport solutions, urban centres can develop efficient 'last mile' delivery systems.

Low-emission vans powered by electric, hydrogen and hybrid technologies could distribute goods to city shops and offices. A fleet of green delivery vehicles would also reduce air and noise pollution. In addition, more effort should be put into encouraging people to travel by public transport and to walk and cycle more.

An integrated approach is the best way to deal with the challenges of urban transport and to develop transport infrastructure and services. Policy-making must therefore link transport with issues such as land use, planning, environmental protection, housing, accessibility, mobility and the needs of industry.

FIND OUT MORE:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/urban/index_en.htm



FORGING BETTER LINKS WITH SOUTH EAST EUROPE

The project runs 2009-2012

ERDF support for the project comes to €1.7 million

Total budget: €2.38 million

South East Europe is a key transit area for the EU, but its development trails behind the rest of the continent due to insufficient investment and transnational cooperation. Challenges like these are addressed by SEETAC (South East European Transport Axis Cooperation), a three-year project that aims to build stronger cooperation between the EU and non-EU countries in this region – notably in the transport field.

Co-funded by the EU's South East Europe Programme, the project includes 17 partners (mostly national transport ministries) from nine countries in the region. It also has four observers, from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

Transport infrastructure varies widely across the region. Countries such as Austria, Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia, for example, boast extensive and modern motorways, while many of their neighbours do not. Cross-border road and rail links between the region's smaller countries are often insufficient or non-existent. This situation hampers the free flow of goods, services and people and ultimately the sustainable development of the entire region.

TEN-T focus

"Our project uniquely brings together EU and non-EU countries to create better spatial integration and transport connections in the region," says Carlo Fortuna of the Central European Initiative Secretariat in Trieste, Italy, which is piloting SEETAC. This contributes to the debate on transport infrastructure for EU candidate and potential candidate countries, as well as the planned extension of TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Networks) priority projects to the Western Balkans. Carlo Fortuna believes the project will also foster greater EU cohesion with South East Europe.

Recent data collection has enabled the partners to compile a database, providing a current picture of road, rail and maritime networks in the region. Over the coming months, they will create a future scenarios model linked to transport priority projects such as a Ljubljana to Belgrade motorway.

A project conference, which brought together high-level ministerial representatives in Tirana, Albania in November 2010 looked at several major issues. Among them are investments, integrated development of the region's accessibility, and paths for creating an integrated transport system there in the medium term, in line with the EU strategy.

FIND OUT MORE:

- SEETAC: www.seetac.eu
- South East Europe (SEE) Programme: www.southeast-europe.net
- Central European Initiative: www.ceinet.org



Renewal of track and cutting at Krizno on the Ljubljana to Maribor line.

SCANDRIA – BRINGING THE BALTIC CLOSER TO THE ADRIATIC

The Scandria corridor linking Scandinavia and the Adriatic Sea plays a crucial role for regions along this North-South axis. Beyond transport facilitation, the added value of improved connections has economic, social and environmental aspects.

“The project is not just about transport”, stresses Jürgen Neumüller, project manager for Scandria. “It aims to bring about economic development for the area as a whole. We want to link Scandinavia’s innovation potential with other regions in Central Europe like Berlin, Prague and Vienna, thereby stimulating growth.”

In line with the EU objective of achieving ‘greener transport’, the project also includes activities aiming to achieve climate change goals. One concrete example is the effort towards stimulating the use of biogas for freight vehicles.

Involving all parties key to success

The 19 project partners from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway can be divided into three groups: research institutions, regions and ports. The lead partner is the Joint Spatial Planning Department Berlin–Brandenburg.

While the research institutions provide the necessary scientific basis for decisions, the regions have a more strategic role to play. Achieving the implementation of infrastructure projects through liaisons with actors such as national ministries is an important part of their work.

The direct cooperation between the ports of Halmstad (Sweden) and Rostock (Germany) focuses on the development of new services. As a spin-off, Scandria also provided the impetus for the inclusion of the ferry line between Rostock and Gedser (Denmark) in the EU’s ‘Motorways of the Sea’ Programme, enabling it to receive funding for modernising port infrastructures and acquiring new ferries.

Involving businesses in the cooperation remains a key objective: their short-term imperatives make it difficult to embed them in the long-term strategic concept. “Several workshops and communication activities at local level have been carried out to raise awareness about the economic benefits of the project”, Neumüller points out.

The Scandria project was set up in 2009 following the Berlin Declaration of November 2007 calling for attractive transport infrastructure and competitive modes of transportation within the Scandinavian-Adriatic Corridor. While Scandria covers the Northern part of the area, the sister project SoNorA implements similar actions for the Southern section.

The project runs 2009-2012

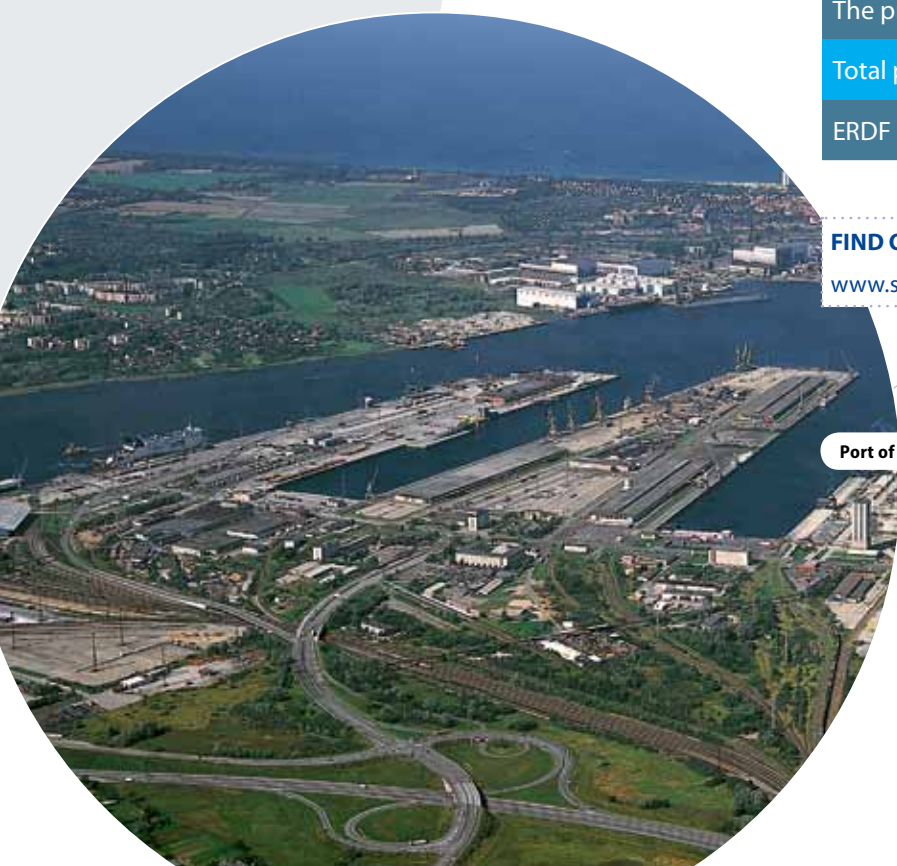
Total project budget: €3.8 million

ERDF contribution: €2.8 million

FIND OUT MORE:

www.scandriaproject.eu

Port of Rostock.



PORTUGAL – VESSEL TRAFFIC SYSTEM IS THE NEW SMART SYSTEM FOR SHIPPING CONTROL

This project started in 2008 and is ongoing

ERDF contribution: €53 million

National co-financing: €57 million

The extensive Portuguese coastline poses many challenges for shipping control, from monitoring shipping flows in busy waters to enforcing international safety standards. Now state-of-the-art computing allows the authorities to stay ahead of all the movements and bring them together within the National Maritime Traffic Database.

The over 800kms coastline is on a strategic route between Northern European ports and Mediterranean and North African ports. Around 70 000 vessels use these waters each year – 250-300 ships are always in these shipping lanes, along with a similar number of fishing and leisure craft. The Vessel Traffic System, VTS, is a solution to the challenge of monitoring all these movements, keeping the coastal waters safe and managing congestion.

How does it work?

Since January 2008, the Coastal Maritime Traffic Control Centre has been running a VTS to monitor shipping flows. Around 300 ships at a time can be identified and this information is fed into the National Maritime Traffic Database.

The system also includes two Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS), one at Cape Roca and the other at Cape Sao Vicente. These manage congestion at two known bottlenecks near the coast and are also part of safety enforcement. Strict international rules apply to dangerous cargoes, types of vessels, passenger safeguards and requirements for fishing vessels. Both TSS are included in the Coast of Portugal Mandatory Reporting System (COPREP) in force since 1 June 2010.

The best systems bring national benefits

The system consists of a coastal VTS, and five port VTS, all of which are under the authority of the National Authority for Maritime Traffic Control.

Benefits include:

- bringing Portugal up to date with state-of-the-art shipping technology and offers;
- ensuring the commercial potential of its ports in the future;
- putting the environmental quality of Portuguese waters high on the agenda and backing this up with information available through the VTS;
- facilitating policing of the coastline through the two-way flow of information between vessels and the coastal authorities. Measures to control smuggling and illegal immigration are now very much a part of day-to-day coastal services.

At the international level, Portugal is now fully involved in the SafeSeaNet, the EU tracking and information system. The myriad information fed through the coastal VTS can now be fed directly into SafeSeaNet enabling Portugal to receive similar types of information from other Member States.

FIND OUT MORE:

http://www.innovative-navigation.de/in_htm/Presse/inPRESSRELEASE_VTCS_Portugal.pdf

Coastal Maritime Traffic Control Centre.



SOFIA METRO EXTENSION BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO THE HEART OF THE CITY

This project forms part of Bulgaria's Operational Programme on Transport, 2007-13

ERDF contribution: €157 million

National co-financing: €139 million

Bulgaria is confronting the problems of traffic congestion and pollution head on with its General Master Plan and especially with the Sofia metro extension projects, one of which will construct the missing central section at the heart of the city.

In Sofia, over 1.5 million people, nearly a fifth of the national population, are crammed into the city centre. The historic centre bustles with a dense mix of residential and commercial areas, and the rapid influx over the last 10 years has created a spiralling problem of traffic congestion and pollution. Residents are very dependent on cars, while buses and trams also compete for road space. An in-depth look at transport solutions clearly pointed to the metro as the best option for the bulk of city-centre journeys.

Better transport brings a new dimension to life in the centre

The new stretch of line from the Nadejda road junction north of the centre to the Cherni Vrah boulevard in the southern residential area is a flagship project under Bulgaria's Operational Programme on Transport 2007-13.

It will provide 6.5 km of track serving seven metro stations, effectively creating the missing section of Line II and linking points north and south of the Central Railway Station and Central Bus Station. Five of the metro stations will be brand new, two others already exist but must be completely upgraded.

Improving life now

The present first phase is an essential step in improving day-to-day life for residents and commuters. Journeys by road in this part of the city are slow and frustrating; traffic speeds are now down to around 8-10km/hour and the related pollution is inevitably a big concern too.

Once Phase I is completed in early 2012, rail transport may account for up to 25% of all journeys, allowing traffic speeds to bounce back to between 40 and 50 km/hour. This would make a big impact on air pollution, as well as reducing noise and vibration levels.

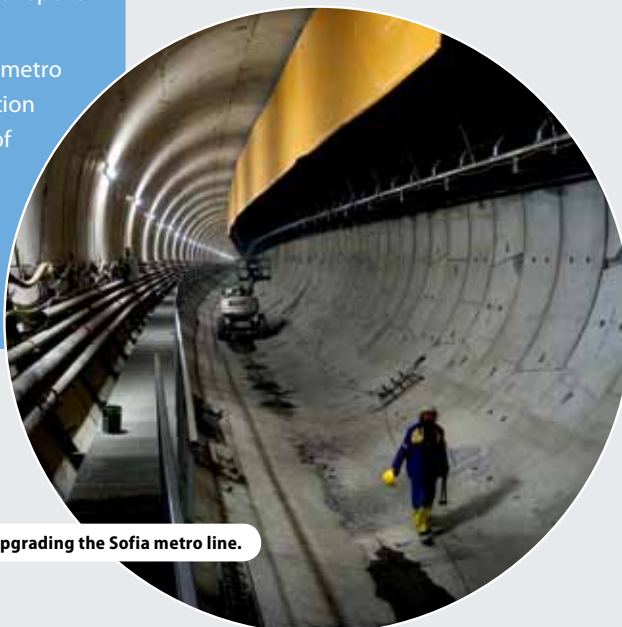
A more integrated, faster network for the future

Looking further ahead to 2020, Phase II will create a much more integrated transport network. Having connected the central train and bus stations, the next step will be to link to the airport and provide travellers with a transport system fit for the 21st century.

Progress so far is very encouraging. All aspects of the project are on schedule and on budget – evidence of good management under the Operational Programme Transport. This in itself is contributing to the positive economic climate and is underpinning wider prospects for urban renewal in the heart of the city.

FIND OUT MORE:

<http://www.metropolitan.bg/en/>



Improving the lives of residents, giving business a boost - upgrading the Sofia metro line.

NEW FACILITIES AT LA ROCHELLE PORT TO MEET A GROWING MARKET

Various projects, of different durations, have contributed to the development of the port

Regional Investment Programme 2007-13: €52 million

ERDF contribution: €12.48 million

National co-financing: €39.52 million

The port of La Rochelle is described by Lloyds of London as “the best Atlantic port, able to handle ships over 100 000t deadweight.” From this position of dominance, La Rochelle has been expanding further to meet the growing demand for shipping and commerce. The new St Marc harbour is completed and in service, while a new sea wall at La Repentie is underway to create further capacity.

The natural assets of La Rochelle

This is the only deep-water port on the Atlantic coast and is naturally protected by islands. It is the main French port for trade in forestry and agricultural products, especially cereals, and demand continues to grow. The strategic aim of the port is to reach an annual throughput of 10m tonnes by 2015. Planning and development of the port extension began in 2000 and is on track for completion by 2012, creating an attractive, state-of-the-art facility which meets the best environmental standards.

St Marc harbour

Completed and in service since March 2011, St Marc harbour is specifically designed for bulk shipping. Its depth means that there is no risk of even the heaviest vessels running aground and the commercial prospects for the port are greatly enhanced by its ability to handle shipping of this size.

La Repentie

Work started in September 2010 to create a further deep-water harbour stretching over 1.4 km. Complementing the development of St Marc, this harbour will enable La Rochelle to meet the growing demand for shipping in all categories.

The emphasis on sustainable development is particularly relevant here: where possible, only local materials have been used and the vast quantities of hard core required are largely recycled from other sites in the region.

Rail and Road Access

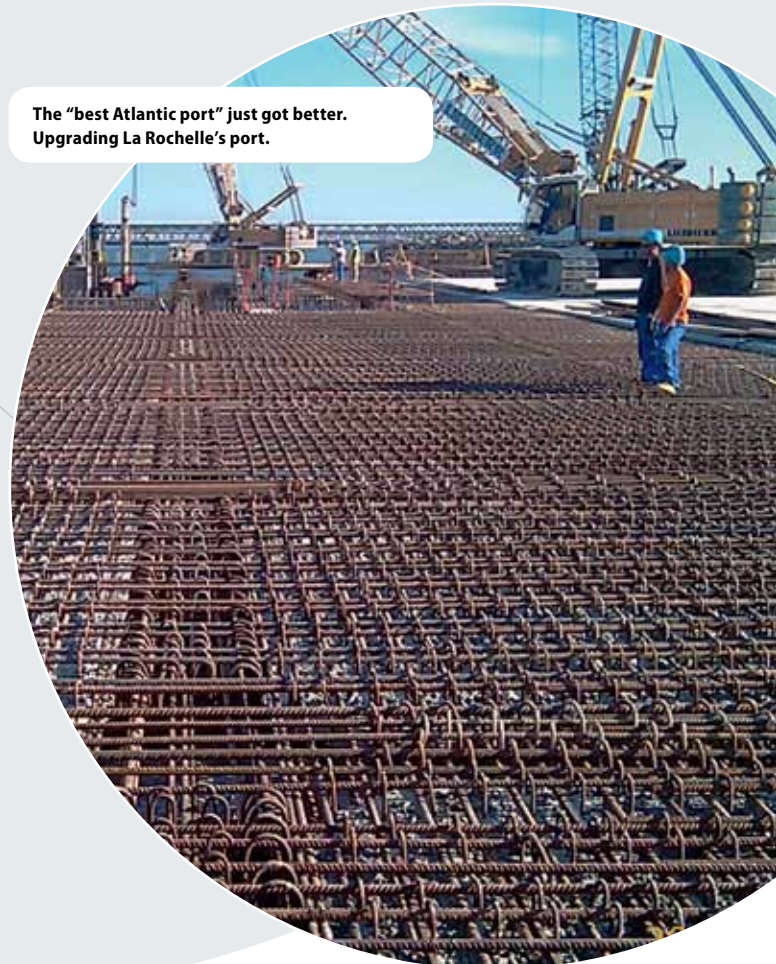
Improved rail and road access and upgraded amenities are another important feature of current investments. The port now owns 45 km of rail network linking all terminals. A €4 million investment has been made in rail capacity, with a particular emphasis on freight. Developing the road infrastructure around Jeumont, the main port entrance, is showing how the port can be made more attractive and more functional.

These massive investments to increase capacity and facilities underpin the prospects for growth in the Poitou-Charentes region. Locally, in Charente-Maritime, prospects for jobs linked to the port continue to grow and the region as a whole is looking ahead to a vibrant future.

FIND OUT MORE:

<http://www.larochelle.port.fr/fr>

The “best Atlantic port” just got better. Upgrading La Rochelle’s port.



DELIVERING A BETTER MOTORWAY IN SLOVENIA

The projects run 2007-10

Cohesion Fund contribution: €87.2 million

Total budget: €219 million

Road journeys between Slovenia and Croatia have become easier since completion of the last two outstanding sections of the A2 motorway in the Dolenjska region. Totalling almost 15 km, this new infrastructure brings transport speed, time and safety benefits at the local, regional and international levels.

By 2013, Slovenia's national motorway construction programme will have added around 600 km of modern highways, expressways and other public roads. The 175-km A2 motorway is an important part of this network, traversing the country from the Karavanke border crossing with Austria via the capital city Ljubljana to the Obrezje border crossing with Croatia.

New infrastructure

The two latest projects took place on the A2 near Novo mesto, from Pluska to Ponikve (7.6 km), and Ponikve to Hrastje (7.2 km). They take traffic that formerly used an expressway.

Carried out by DARS Motorway Company and partly financed by the EU's Cohesion Fund, the work included construction of 20 pieces of infrastructure. Among them were the Leščevoje dual-flow tunnel, viaducts in Dole, Ponikve and Trebnje, nine underpasses, an overpass for pedestrians and four overpasses for vehicles.

The Motorway Company of Slovenia keeping an eye on the system.

Benefits already being felt

The new motorway sections opened in June 2010. They should mostly benefit inhabitants in south-east Slovenia, boosting regional trade and tourism as well as shortening the trips of daily commuters to Ljubljana. Road safety and capacity have also been increased, while noise barriers and other new infrastructure will improve the local environment.

The new motorway also enhances transport links to Croatia, while contributing to completion of the pan-European transport corridor 10 from Salzburg in Austria to Thessalonica in Greece. It therefore represents a significant extension of the TEN-T network towards Central and Eastern Europe, ahead of the EU's next enlargement.

Another key section (10 km) of the A2 motorway opened to traffic in September 2008 between Vrba and Peračica in north-west Slovenia, with the final 2.4 km section between Peračica and Podtabor opening in June 2011. This project was also co-funded by the EU and improves the flow of local, national and transit traffic in an area known for its road bottlenecks.

FIND OUT MORE:

www.dars.si/Dokumenti/About_motorways/National_motorway_construction_programme_282.aspx



LINE UPGRADE WITH INTERNATIONAL BENEFITS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The project runs 2008-11

Cohesion Fund contribution: €105 million

Total budget: €144.2 million

Train trips across the Czech Republic are faster, more comfortable and safer, thanks to major upgrades of the nation's east-west third transit rail corridor. Completion of a 32-km stretch of line in this corridor's westernmost section is a significant milestone. It also heralds better rail links to Germany, while benefiting the wider Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).

The project took place between the towns of Stříbro and Planá u Mariánských Lázní. Goals were to bring rail track and related infrastructure up to modern European standards, while improving the connection between Prague and Pilsen, and Cheb, a town close to the Czech/German border. Partly funded by the EU, it is one of nine separate rail modernisation projects along the "170" railway line.

Faster, heavier trains

From mid-2008, contractors upgraded track superstructure on the main rails to an international heavy-duty standard, to carry trains at 110 km/h with 22.5 tonne axle loads. They also modernised traction lines, telecommunication and signalling equipment, and so on. Eight level crossings were reconstructed or modified.



Locomotive on newly upgraded line at Stříbro.

With the new infrastructure in place, the fastest trains with tilting technology will move along this line at up to 140 km/h, equivalent to a 50 km/h increase. This will cut journey times for domestic, international and transit passenger and freight traffic using the Prague-Cheb rail route between the Czech Republic and Germany. "The value of time-savings for rail transport here is estimated at more than €2 million a year", says Filip Hainall, from the Czech Ministry of Transport.

EU-standard infrastructure

Greater load-bearing capacity means tracks can carry international-standard containers, while increasing the reliability of freight transport. Preparation of safety and communication equipment has readied the line for installation of the latest European Rail Traffic Management System/European Train Control System.

Enhanced travel speed, safety and comfort on this line will benefit people across the region and beyond. It should also boost traffic and trade on the long-distance TEN-T railway axis from Athens in Greece to Nürnberg in Germany. So investment in this project will be of benefit for the entire European Union.

FIND OUT MORE:

Czech Railway Infrastructure Administration
www.szdc.cz

RETHINKING URBAN MOBILITY: THE ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK

Changing urban mobility patterns can make a significant contribution to tackling transport problems and reducing fossil fuel dependency. In the face of the economic crisis and steadily increasing oil prices, this takes on even greater importance. The 'Active Travel Network' was set up to reduce solo car use in small and medium-sized cities by exploiting the potential for a high modal shift.

Part of the URBACT II programme, the network encourages walking and cycling as real 'active travel' alternatives. The network's priority focus is on mobility management and travel awareness.

Awareness-raising is a key focus of the project. Since considerable know-how and documented knowledge such as handbooks or design guides on infrastructure and planning solutions already exist, the network consciously targets the 'soft dimension' of the issue:

- fostering desired behaviour and curbing undesired behaviour through appropriate 'push & pull' strategies;
- marketing;
- changing people's thinking (stakeholders) and behaviour (citizens);
- organising non-motorised transport and linking to public transport; and
- developing education and training.

Common and specific challenges

As a first step, network partners completed active travel audits – based on the existing Bicycle Policy Audit (BYPAD) scheme – to lay the basis for exchange and learning activities, reviews of experiences and development of Local Action Plans. Unlike other expert-led audit schemes, the audits involved three groups of stakeholders: politicians, local authorities and planners as well as users who are now members of the URBACT Local Support Group in each partner city. Together, they defined the main elements of the action plan including its priorities, essential measures, and terms of implementation as well as the responsibilities of the different actors.

All partners face common issues such as a lack of integrated cycling-walking policies, a high potential to replace short car trips by walking or cycling and the absence of a concerned stakeholder group. But they also have to deal with specific challenges, and this is why each Local Action Plan will focus on a particular theme (e. g. the health impact of the EU's noise reduction directive).

The project is led by the Austrian City of Weiz. Partners are Norderstedt (Germany), Skanderborg (Denmark), Serres (Greece), Novara and Riccione (Italy), Radzionkow (Poland), Sebes (Romania), Lugo (Spain), Ljutomer (Slovenia) as well as the University of Graz (Austria).

FIND OUT MORE:

<http://urbact.eu/en/projects/low-carbon-urban-environments/active-travel-network/>



Transport infrastructure is an important driver of regional development. An efficient transport network is essential for sustainable economic growth as well as territorial balance. Regions lagging behind face problems of economic development that stem partly from inadequate transport systems and poor links with the other regions in the countries concerned as well as with other regions in the EU. It is not a coincidence that most Objective 1 regions in the EU-15 are located in the periphery of the EU, away from both national and EU centres of economic activity.

The Structural and Cohesion Funds have historically been a major source of finance for the investment needed to reduce imbalances in transport infrastructure in lagging regions across the EU. Despite substantial investment in Objective 1 regions in previous programming periods, there remained major disparities in endowment across the EU at the beginning of the 2000-06 period as regards both fast means of travel between regions and efficient connections within regions.

Transport problems in the EU-12 countries were even more pressing. Here the main deficiency was not so much gaps in the networks but the state of roads and railways. Journey times were typically much longer both because many roads and railways were in urgent need of repair after years of neglect and because they were not designed for present-day traffic volumes.

Targeting funds to boost sustainability

Cohesion policy has improved the EU road network and the quality of rail infrastructure and relieved capacity constraints at key ports and airports. This helps support economic development among the regions qualifying for assistance. However, the emphasis on road-based projects in the 2000-06 period has not facilitated modal shift, which remains a challenge to environmental sustainability, nor has it addressed congestion or other problems resulting from the growth of road traffic.

While the EU-12 will need to continue upgrading their existing road networks in line with EU standards, transport investment should increasingly focus on delivering sustainable transport solutions at both national and regional levels. Investment will need to support key policy objectives, such as reducing carbon and other emissions from road transport, relieving congestion and improving road safety. These objectives will need to be supported through targeted investments designed to encourage a modal shift away from the private car and the transport of freight by road.

When it comes to rail, and more specifically high-speed railway lines, the role of EU funds should be examined and justified on a case-by-case basis, with funding only provided in cases which encourage regional development beyond the main centres served. Other sources of investment are available for the development of the EU strategic rail network (e.g. TEN-T budget). In addition, evidence shows that investment in standard rail is often a preferable solution, achieving regional development with less funding and in less time.

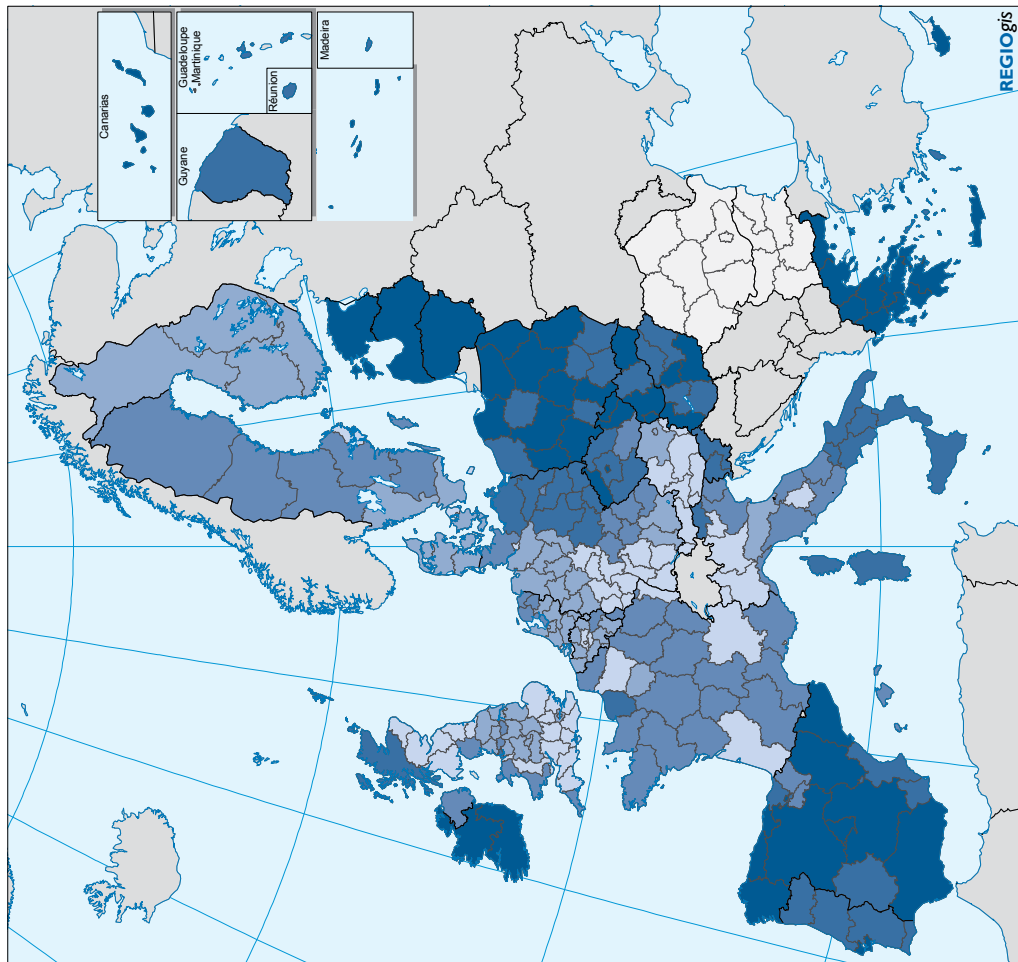
For other modes of transport (air and sea), where results are less clear, investment should encourage regional development. The use of EU funds should be conditional on other sources of funds available for this type of investment. For example, the capacity of multimodal connections may be a better investment than just the capacity of a given port itself.

Evidence from Ex Post Evaluation of 2000-06

Overall, some €33.8 billion was allocated to transport from the ERDF over the programming period. €17.2 billion was made available from the Cohesion Fund.

- **ERDF** co-financed 13% of all new high-speed rail lines and 24% of the extension of motorways
- **ERDF** co-financed 26% of 7 734 km of motorway completed in the EU-15 and upgrading of 3 000 km of railway lines
- **Cohesion Fund** co-financed 1 281 km of new roads and 3 176 km of reconstructed roads (**4 457 km of roads** (new and reconstructed) in total)
- **Cohesion Fund** co-financed 2 010 km of new rail and 3 840 km of reconstructed rail (**5 850 km of rail** (new and reconstructed) in total)

Investments of regional policy in transport infrastructure, 2000-06



% of total funding

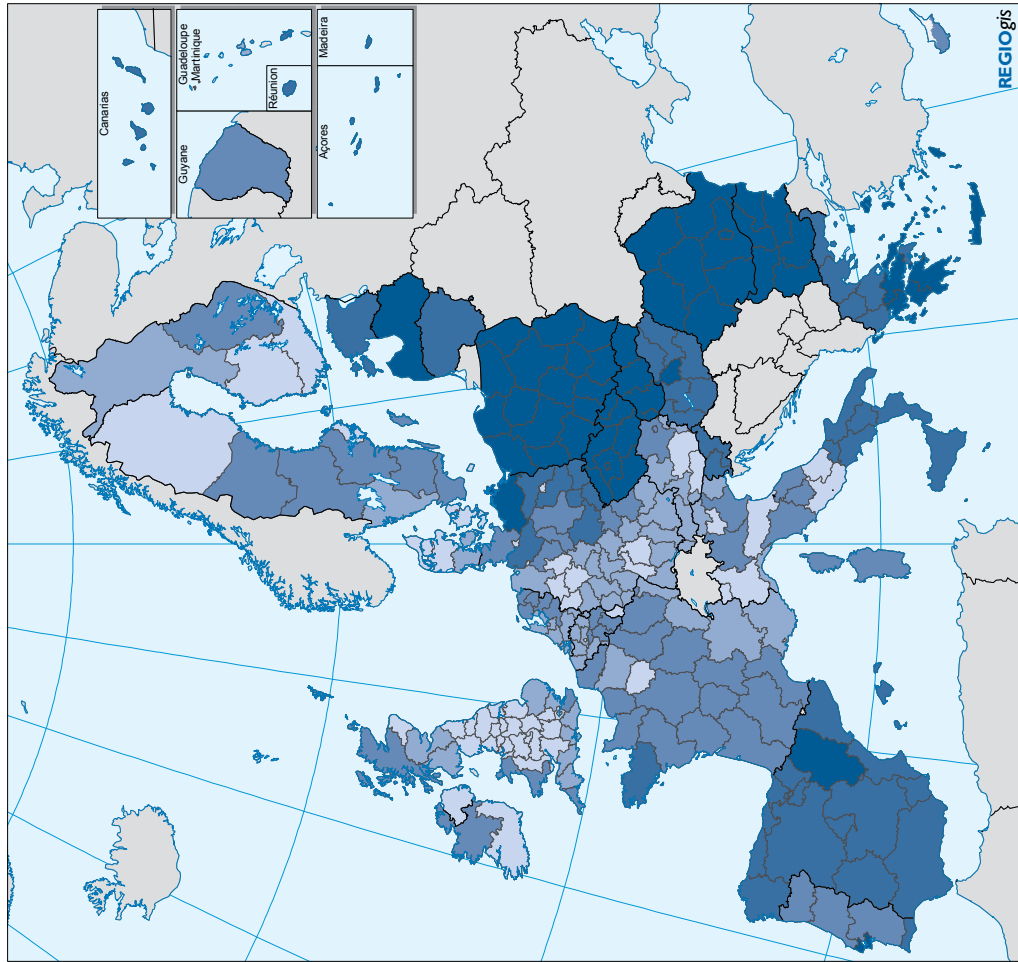
< 0.13
0.13 - 2.62
2.62 - 10.07
10.07 - 27.49
>= 27.49

EU-27 = 22.3
Funding for transport infrastructure amounts
to some €48 billion
Source: DG REGIO

0 500 Km

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Planned investments of regional policy in transport infrastructure, 2007-13



% of total funding

< 1.33
1.33 - 3.47
3.47 - 12.03
12.03 - 25.45
>= 25.45

EU-27 = 22.0
Funding for transport infrastructure amounts
to some €76 billion
Source: DG REGIO

0 500 Km

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RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE FIFTH COHESION REPORT

With more than 444 contributions received between 12th November 2010 and 31st January 2011, the public consultation on the conclusions of the 5th Cohesion Report was a real success, allowing hundreds of contributors to express their views on the future of cohesion policy.

WHO RESPONDED?

- 26 Member States
- 225 regional and local authorities
- 66 economic and social partners
- 37 European interest groups on territorial issues
- 29 civil society organisations
- 21 citizens
- 15 private companies
- 8 academic and research institutions
- 1 EU institution
- 9 other stakeholders

Enhancing the added value of cohesion policy

The role of cohesion policy in promoting the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy was overwhelmingly welcomed by respondents, although many stressed the need for flexibility to meet specific needs and challenges.

Greater coordination between the ERDF, the ESF, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) was important to respondents.

Although there is also a broad consensus on the need to make cohesion policy more effective, doing so through the introduction of conditionality, incentives, or a performance reserve was highly debated in the contributions.

Strengthening governance

Contributions show a general consensus on the need for an ambitious urban agenda, but also for better linkages between urban and rural areas and the development of macro-regional strategies. Since cohesion policy involves many different governance levels and stakeholders, many contributors supported the idea of reinforcing the partnership principle through a greater involvement of local partners.

A streamlined delivery system

A simpler delivery system was the basic idea endorsed by most respondents who argued for a revamped audit process as well as stronger coordination amongst funds. There was general agreement on the extension of the N+2 decommitment rules at least in the first year, possibly extending to N+3.

The architecture of cohesion policy

According to most of the respondents, the ESF should be maintained as it is, but synergies and greater coordination with the ERDF would be welcomed. Finally, the creation of a category of intermediate regions, replacing the actual phasing-in and phasing-out system, was widely endorsed by most contributors. The results of the public consultation will feed into the reflections on the post-2013 legislative framework.

FIND OUT MORE:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/5cr/answers_en.cfm



DATES 2011	EVENT	PLACE
15-16 September	The Benefits of Transnational Cooperation: 13 Programmes – 1 Goal: to improve quality of life in European regions!	Katowice (PL)
10-13 October	Open Days	Brussels (BE)
24-26 October	Baltic Development Forum and 2 nd Annual Stakeholder Forum for the EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy	Gdańsk (PL)
27-28 October	JEREMIE–JESSICA Conference	Warsaw (PL)
24 November	Conference: Integrated approach to development – a key to Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Europe	Poznań (PL)
25 November	Informal meeting of ministers	Poznań (PL)
28-29 November	ESPO week – ESPO 2013 seminar	Kracow (PL)

Additional information on these events can be found in the Agenda section on our Inforegio website:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/agenda/



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