

Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructure

Ahead of the Commission's forthcoming proposals on the new Multiannual Financial Framework, which are expected in May 2018, the May I plenary session is expected to discuss an own-initiative report which assesses the implementation of cohesion policy and the thematic objective of promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructure, including recommendations for the post-2020 period.

Background

Investments in transport infrastructure are one of the most visible achievements of the EU's cohesion policy, and can make a significant contribution to the development of individual regions. Transport investments made under the European structural and investment funds (ESIF), the EU's principal investment tool supporting its cohesion policy, must focus on thematic objective 7 on promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructure, one of 11 thematic objectives (TO) established under the [Common Provisions Regulation](#) to ensure efficient and targeted use of ESIF in 2014-2020. While the trans-European transport network, a planned EU-wide multimodal network facilitating the movement of goods and people across the EU, is one of the main areas of focus of such investments, ESIF funding under this thematic objective may also be used for local or regional transport infrastructure, such as for the development of low-carbon transport systems or the promotion of noise-reduction measures. As with other ESIF investments, transport projects funded under ESIF must also involve national co-financing.

Including Member State contributions, a total budget of €70 billion is available during 2014-2020 for transport projects under the ESIF, while a total of €24 billion is available for implementation under the [Connecting Europe Facility](#) (CEF), an EU funding instrument that aims to accelerate the development of infrastructure in transport and the delivery of EU transport projects.

European Parliament position

On 27 March 2018, Parliament's Regional Development Committee (REGI) adopted its own-initiative [report](#), due to be voted during the May I plenary session. It emphasises that during the next programming period, the CEF, CF and ERDF should continue to be the main EU sources for transport infrastructure investments under the thematic objective TO7, noting that they should remain available and ensure balanced coverage for all Member States. Highlighting that EU transport infrastructure investments should continue to include centrally managed (CEF) and shared management (CF, ERDF) sources, it calls for the budget of the three funding sources to be strengthened in a balanced way, stressing the need to define the role of complementary sources such as the European Fund for Strategic Investments. Noting that infrastructure demands must be quantified before the budget is set, Parliament calls on the Commission to draw up a checklist of eligibility criteria that reflects regional needs, using data from the [EU Transport Scoreboard](#). The report stresses that ERDF, CF and CEF should concentrate more on more integrated investments in basic transport infrastructure in less developed regions, calling also for extra resources for ERDF support to European territorial cooperation, with a focus on cross-border connectivity, including on external borders, and the closure of Western Balkans infrastructure gaps. It urges the inclusion of climate protection in cohesion policy under TO7, arguing that thematic concentration should be maintained to allow funding synergies.

Own-initiative report: [2017/2285 \(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: REGI; Rapporteur: Andrey Novakov (EPP, Bulgaria).

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