



COMMON TRANSPORT POLICY: OVERVIEW

Transport policy has been one of the EU's common policies for more than 30 years. Alongside the opening-up of transport markets and the creation of the Trans-European Transport Network, the 'sustainable mobility' model will take on even greater importance between now and 2020 – particularly in view of the constant rise in greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector, which threatens to jeopardise the European Union's efforts to achieve its climate goals.

LEGAL BASIS AND OBJECTIVES

The legal basis is supplied by Article 4(2)(g) and Title VI of the TFEU. As long ago as the [Treaty of Rome](#), Member States stressed the importance of a common transport policy by devoting a separate title to it. Transport was therefore one of the Community's first common policy areas. The first priority was the creation of a common transport market, the establishment of freedom to provide services and the opening-up of transport markets. This goal has been achieved to a large extent, because even domestic rail markets have steadily been opened up to competition. As transport markets open up, it is vital to create fair competitive conditions both within individual modes of transport and between them. For this reason, the harmonisation of national laws, regulations and administrative provisions, and of the technological, social and tax environment in which transport services are provided, has taken on ever-increasing importance. Volumes of goods and passengers transported have increased as a result of the completion of the European internal market, the abolition of internal borders, the drop in transport prices as a result of the opening-up and liberalisation of transport markets, and changes in manufacturing and stock management systems. An economically successful and dynamic transport sector has found itself facing increasingly serious social and environmental constraints, however, so that the 'sustainable mobility' model has become more important than ever before.

Despite all the efforts made, European transport policy still faces many challenges in the area of sustainability. The transport sector accounts for roughly a quarter of total man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the EU. Furthermore, transport is the only sector in the EU whose GHG emissions have risen since 1990. This is why the 2011 White Paper entitled 'Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system' ([COM\(2011\)0144](#)) recommended a 20% reduction in transport emissions (excluding international maritime transport) between 2008 and 2030, and a reduction of at least 60% between 1990 and 2050. It also sought a 40% reduction in emissions from international maritime transport between 2005 and 2050. The 2011 White Paper urged that sustainable, low-



carbon fuels should account for 40% of consumption in aviation by 2050, and advocated a 50% shift away from conventionally fuelled cars in urban transport by 2030, with the aim of phasing them out totally by 2050.

These objectives fall well short of the goal set at the December 2015 Climate Conference in Paris (also known as the ‘COP21’): reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% between 2021 and 2030. Even if they were achieved, it would mean that in 2030 emissions from transport (excluding international waterborne transport) would still be 4.5% above 1990 levels, and emissions from international waterborne transport would only be 9.5% below their 1990 level in 2050. Between now and 2020, realism will prove to be just as important as ambition in addressing the economic and environmental challenges facing the common transport policy, and thus in helping to cut emissions drastically. The transport sector therefore needs to use less and cleaner energy, exploit modern infrastructure more effectively, and reduce its impact on the environment.

GENERAL POLICY GUIDELINES

The way forward to common legislation in the transport sector was only cleared when the European Parliament brought proceedings against the Council for failure to act. In its 22 May 1985 judgment in [Case 13/83](#), the CJEU urged the Council to act and thus to start the process of developing a genuine common transport policy.

On 2 December 1992, the Commission adopted the 1992 White Paper on the future development of the common transport policy ([COM\(1992\)0494](#)). It advocated the opening-up of transport markets, extending the Trans-European Transport Network, improving safety and harmonising social provisions. At the same time, it marked a decisive shift towards an integrated, intermodal approach based on the model of ‘sustainable mobility’. The subsequent White Paper of 22 July 1998, entitled ‘Fair payment for infrastructure use: a phased approach to a common transport infrastructure charging framework in the EU’ ([COM\(1998\)0466](#)), drew attention to the significant differences between Member States in the area of charging for transport services, which was leading to intra-modal and intermodal distortions of competition

IMPLEMENTATION

In the September 2001 White Paper entitled ‘European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to decide’ ([COM\(2001\)0370](#)), the Commission analysed the problems and challenges facing European transport policy – in particular with regard to the then forthcoming eastern enlargement of the EU. It predicted a massive rise in the volume of traffic, which would go hand in hand with traffic jams, congestion (particularly in the case of road and air transport) and increasing health and environmental costs. The Commission put forward a package of 60 measures, which were designed to break the link between economic and traffic growth, and to combat the uneven growth in the various modes of transport. The goal of this White Paper was also to stabilise the share of traffic accounted for by rail transport, inland navigation and short sea shipping at 1998 levels. This goal was to be achieved by means of measures to revive rail transport, to promote sea and inland waterway transport, and foster the interlinking of all modes of transport.



In addition, emphasis was placed on a revision of the guidelines for the Trans-European Networks (see the fact sheet on TEN-T [3.5.1](#)), with a view to adapting them to the demands of the enlarged EU and to encouraging even greater efforts to eliminate cross-border bottlenecks. The 2001 White Paper also focused on the rights and obligations of transport users, made provisions for an action plan on road safety, and consolidated users' rights and cost transparency through the harmonisation of charging principles.

The EU also launched some ambitious technological projects, such as the European satellite navigation system Galileo, the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), and the SESAR programme to improve air traffic control infrastructure.

In June 2006, the Commission submitted a mid-term appraisal of the 2001 White Paper ([COM\(2006\)0314](#)), entitled 'Keep Europe moving – Sustainable mobility for our continent'. The Commission had already stated its view that the measures proposed in 2001 were not comprehensive enough to achieve the objectives set, so new instruments were introduced including:

- a. Action plans for goods transport logistics, for the deployment of intelligent transport systems in Europe, and for urban mobility;
- b. Naiades and Naiades II, an integrated European action programme for inland waterway transport; and
- c. Strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy up to 2018.

In July 2008, the Commission presented the '[Greening Transport](#)' Package, focusing on a strategy to internalise the external costs of transport. The package consisted of three Commission communications and a proposal for the revision of [Directive 1999/62/EC](#) of 17 June 1999, also known as the 'Eurovignette' Directive (see the fact sheet entitled 'Road transport: harmonisation of legislation' [3.4.3](#)).

The results of the debate on the long-term future of transport (looking 20 to 40 years ahead) which was launched in the 2001 White Paper were presented in the Commission communication entitled 'A sustainable future for transport: Towards an integrated, technology-led and user friendly system' ([COM\(2009\)0279](#)).

The Commission published its 2011 White Paper on the future of transport for the period to 2050, entitled 'Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system' ([COM\(2011\)0144](#)) on 28 March 2011. The Commission described the transition between old and new challenges for transport, and outlined ways of meeting those challenges. Among the 10 objectives included in the 2011 White Paper, the Commission sought to set up a Single European Transport Area by doing away with all remaining barriers between modes and national systems, by easing the process of integration, and by facilitating the emergence of multinational and multimodal operators. A higher degree of convergence and enforcement of social, safety, security and environmental rules, minimum service standards and users' rights was sought in order to avoid tensions and distortions. On 1 July 2016, the Commission presented a report in the form of a working document ([SWD\(2016\)0226](#)) on the progress made in implementing the 10-year programme set



out in the 2011 White Paper. Annex II includes a comprehensive assessment of the activities undertaken until that point.

In 2016, the Commission published a communication entitled 'A European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility' ([COM\(2016\)0501](#)), in which it proposed measures to accelerate the decarbonisation of European transport. The strategy aims primarily at reaching a zero-emission target, as set in the 2011 White Paper on the future of transport, with a view to adequately contributing to achievement of the COP 21 Paris Agreement goals.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Alongside fundamental support for the liberalisation of transport markets and the 'sustainable mobility' model, Parliament has continued to stress the need to combine this with comprehensive harmonisation of the social, tax and technological environment and of safety standards.

On 12 February 2003, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the Commission's 2001 White Paper entitled 'European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to decide' ([COM\(2001\)0370](#)). The resolution stressed that the idea of sustainability should be the foundation of and the standard for European transport policy, and the importance of creating an integrated global transport system. This would be done without undermining the competitiveness of road transport, and on a basis of fair charging that covers infrastructure and external costs for each mode of transport. Parliament made a multitude of specific calls and proposals covering each individual mode of transport, transport safety, the timetable for completing and funding for the TEN-T, more effective coordination with other EU policy areas, and other transport-related topics.

Following the Commission's Green Paper entitled 'Towards a new culture for urban mobility' ([COM\(2007\)0551](#)) – published on 25 September 2007), Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on 9 July 2008 under the same title. Furthermore, Parliament adopted another [resolution](#) on 23 April 2009 entitled 'Action plan on urban mobility'. Parliament called, among other things, for the development at European level of an integrated global approach to urban mobility which should serve as a common frame of reference for European, national, regional and local actors. The Commission responded to this call shortly afterwards with a communication bearing the same title, 'Action plan on urban mobility' ([COM\(2009\)0490](#)), published on 20 September 2009.

In response to a further Commission communication, entitled 'Together towards competitive and resource-efficient urban mobility' ([COM\(2013\)0913](#)), published on 17 December 2013, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on 'Sustainable urban mobility' on 2 December 2015. In the resolution, Member States and cities are encouraged to draw up sustainable urban mobility plans which give priority to low-emission modes of transport, alternative fuelled vehicles and intelligent transport systems. The Commission and the Member States were urged to establish a Sustainable Mobility Network of best-practice examples of spatial planning and space use, as well as to launch public awareness campaigns that promote sustainable mobility. Cities were also encouraged to take part in a 'Smart Cities and Communities European Innovation Partnership'.



Following a Commission communication ([COM\(2009\)0279](#)) entitled ‘A sustainable future for transport: Towards an integrated, technology-led and user friendly system’, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on 6 July 2010 on a sustainable future for transport. Not only did this text look ahead to the new White Paper of 2011, but Parliament also responded to the Commission communication by putting forward a wide-ranging list of demands covering the whole spectrum of EU transport policy.

Parliament adopted two resolutions following the publication of the 2011 White Paper. The first was a [resolution](#) adopted on 15 December 2011, entitled ‘[Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system](#)’. In this resolution, Parliament carried out an ex ante assessment of the main objectives outlined in the 2011 White Paper and gave partial approval to the progress made in implementing it. On the establishment of a Single European Transport Area by 2020, the resolution stressed the insufficiently explored potential of transport in many areas and emphasised the importance of a system that focuses on interconnection and interoperability. Parliament approved the 10 objectives for a competitive and resource-efficient transport system and the goals set in the White Paper for 2030 and 2050.

On 9 September 2015, Parliament adopted a second [resolution](#) on the implementation of the 2011 White Paper entitled: ‘Taking stock and the way forward towards sustainable mobility’. In the context of the mid-term review, on 1 July 2016 the Commission published a working document ([SWD\(2016\)0226](#)) entitled ‘The implementation of the 2011 White Paper on Transport five years after its publication: achievements and challenges’. Parliament invited the Commission to maintain at least the level of ambition shown when setting the original goals. What is more, Parliament stressed that there was a great deal of work to be done on an operational and financial level to achieve these goals. It called on the Commission to come up with additional legislative measures and a comprehensive strategy for the development of low-carbon transport so that the objective of at least a 60% reduction in GHG emissions from transport could be achieved by 2050. Parliament made a series of recommendations seeking to integrate all transport modes in order to create a more efficient, sustainable, competitive, accessible and user-friendly transport system. The main points included modal shift and co-modality, modern infrastructure and smart funding, urban mobility, placing people at the heart of transport policy, and the global dimension of transport. Parliament’s Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies has recently published a study entitled ‘[Modal shift in European transport: a way forward](#)’.

Furthermore, in its resolution on a European strategy for low-emission mobility adopted in December 2017, Parliament highlighted the need for the transport sector to make a greater contribution to climate goals. In this context, it emphasised, among other aspects:

- The need for investment in multimodality and public transport;
- The need for sending clearer price signals across all transport modes in order to better reflect the polluter pays and user pays principles; and
- The role of digitalisation in sustainable mobility.



Parliament also called for a more ambitious approach to renewables in transport than that proposed in the recast of the Renewable Energy Directive, and the creation of incentives for the deployment of sustainable alternative fuels for those transport modes that currently have no alternatives to liquid fuel. Following a Commission communication entitled 'Towards the broadest use of alternative fuels – an Action Plan on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure' ([COM\(2017\)0652](#)), Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) in October 2018 calling on the Commission to bring forward a revision of Directive 2014/94/EU on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure and to focus on its proper implementation.

Parliament also welcomed the Commission communication entitled 'On the road to automated mobility' ([COM\(2018\)0283](#)), but in a [resolution](#) of 15 January 2019 stressed that European actors must join forces to take on a role as world leaders in autonomous transport.

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