

Regional connectivity through an adequate transport infrastructure


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This study provides an overview of the aspects of regional connectivity through adequate cohesion policy investments in rail and road transport infrastructures, mostly in the programming period 2014-2020. In detail, this analysis covers all types of transport-related investments (for goods and people) financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF). Moreover, the study provides concrete policy recommendations relevant to EU decision-making on how to improve future EU Cohesion Policy investment in the domain of regional connectivity.

Main observations

EU Cohesion Policy (ECP) is still a vital financial tool to improve regional accessibility performances across the EU territory. It has also been crucial to address regional accessibility imbalances in the EU, as it has allocated a larger financial package to EU regions that require modernisation and improvements in their transport infrastructure connections. As such, future programming periods should continue their effort to make the EU territory adequately linked with a modern, sustainable, regular, smart and fast transport network system that serves the needs of people and businesses.

The study

analyses EU Cohesion Policy (2014-2020) rail and road infrastructure investment and provides recommendations on how to improve it.

In view of the regional accessibility needs in many EU regions, ECP should maintain or increase its investment to continue the process of improving regional accessibility across the EU territory. These investments should target the construction or renovation of high-speed train connections that can substitute short-distance flights and provide an effective connection between major and medium-sized towns in a national context. Furthermore, rural areas should also be adequately served by interconnected transport



networks, as access to public transport should be regarded as a service of general interest for all citizens.

At the transnational and cross-border level, ECP should increase its funding for the Interreg A and B programmes, as all existing studies point to the fact that there are still many cross-border EU regions with low levels of cross-border transport accessibility. Moreover, these cross-border transport infrastructures need to be appropriately linked with existing regional transport infrastructure to increase interoperability.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

In future ECP phases, available funding for improving regional accessibility should be allocated to finance existing spatial planning strategies that are aligned with green and smart mobility policy goals. In this domain, policy areas such as support for expanding charging networks for electric and hydrogen-driven cars should be made a priority with ECP regional accessibility-related funding. Likewise, the implementation of urban metro systems driven by renewable energy sources in all EU capitals as well as the modernisation and expansion of existing urban metro systems should also be a priority for future ECP investment.


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Alongside, urban metro systems or fast railway lines should be available to link existing major national airports, increasing transport intramodality. Ideally, future ECP phases should prioritise regional accessibility investment, aiming to link all major and medium EU urban settlements via a green and smart high-speed railway network that can effectively replace many current regional flights and thus contribute to achieving EU Green Deal goals. Furthermore ECP should be mobilised to contribute, at the research and development level, to the adoption of sustainable transportation solutions.. Finally, research on how to turn existing highways and railways into producers of renewable energy (e.g. solar) should also be supported.

In sum, ECP funding should focus on supporting:

- High-speed rail services as a means to link EU medium-sized cities and to replace short-haul flights.
- Regional transport accessibility in rural and cross-border areas.
- Sustainable and smart transport mobility and multimodal urban mobility.
- The modernisation and expansion of main railway networks as well as road, maritime and airport accessibility.

- Railway, metro and tram connections between existing international and regional airports in all EU capitals and main/medium cities.
- Energy efficiency of all vehicle types and transport modes.
- Transport regional accessibility in the EU's less socioeconomically developed Member States and regions.
- Transport links between EU harbours and the rail and road network.
- Cross-border and transnational transport networks and rural areas.

Key Findings

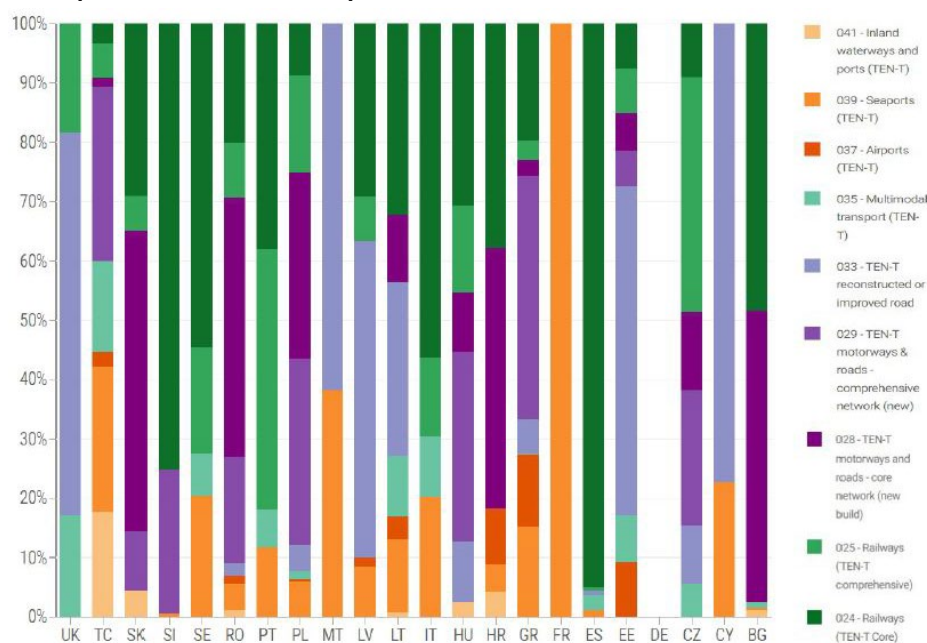
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At the transnational and cross-border level, ECP should increase its funding for the Interreg A and B programmes.

ECP should also contribute to increasing support for the TEN-T network to reduce regional accessibility gaps between EU major and medium-sized cities.

2014-2020 - TEN-T planned allocations by intervention and Member State



Source: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>

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