



Plenary sitting

A9-0181/2023

5.5.2023

REPORT

on large transport infrastructure projects in the EU – implementation of projects and monitoring and control of EU funds
(2022/2021(INI))

Committee on Budgetary Control

Rapporteur: Andrey Novakov

Rapporteur for the opinion of the associated committee pursuant to Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure:
Colm Markey, Committee on Transport and Tourism

CONTENTS

	Page
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION.....	3
OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM.....	14
INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE.....	24
FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE	25

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on large transport infrastructure projects in the EU – implementation of projects and monitoring and control of EU funds (2022/2021(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2093 of 17 December 2020 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 2027¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility²,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (Financial Regulation)³,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1316/2013 and (EU) No 283/2014⁴,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network and repealing Decision No 661/2010/EU (TEN-T Regulation)⁵,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 14 December 2021 for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 and Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulation (EU) 1315/2013 (COM(2021)0812),
- having regard to Special Report 10/2020 of the European Court of Auditors of 16 June 2020 entitled ‘EU transport infrastructures: more speed needed in megaproject implementation to deliver network effects on time’,
- having regard to Review No 05/2021 of the European Court of Auditors of 25 November 2021 entitled ‘The EU framework for large transport infrastructure

¹ OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 11.

² OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17.

³ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 249, 14.7.2021, p. 38.

⁵ OJ L 348, 20.12.2013, p. 1.

projects: an international comparison’,

- having regard to its previous decisions and resolutions on discharge to the Commission for the years 2017⁶, 2018⁷, 2019⁸ and 2020⁹,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Transport and Tourism,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A9-0181/2023),
- A. whereas the EU’s common transport policy was established to create a common transport area across Europe; whereas its priority operational objective since 2013 has been to build a ‘core network’ by 2030, and a ‘comprehensive network’ by 2050; whereas these networks comprise all modes of transport, including maritime, rail, road and air;
- B. whereas the Member States bear responsibility for implementing projects in the network and this is governed by the TEN-T Regulation; whereas at EU level, responsibility for devising and implementing transport policy lies with the Commission;

Large transport projects in the EU

1. Highlights that the Union’s transport policy aims to ensure the smooth, efficient, safe and free movement of people and goods throughout the EU by means of integrated networks using all modes of transport, aiming to provide efficient, interoperable, safe and environmentally friendly mobility solutions within the EU and to create the conditions for a competitive industry generating growth and jobs; highlights that the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) policy is key to the good functioning of the single market and the EU’s socioeconomic and territorial cohesion, as well as to fostering the connectivity and accessibility of all regions in the EU and achieving the European Green Deal’s objectives; recalls that large infrastructure projects play a crucial role in delivering on the TEN-T policy and are of instrumental importance in removing bottlenecks and eliminating missing links, including on cross-border sections; recalls that large transport infrastructure may also contribute to the sustainable development of European regions by enhancing green connectivity, which contributes to protecting the environment through the reduction of CO₂ emissions; highlights the fact that completing the TEN-T will foster growth, jobs and cohesion throughout the Union and help it meet its socioeconomic and climate goals;
2. Acknowledges that large projects play a key role in transport networks, delivering great socioeconomic benefits, creating and sustaining employment, improving productivity and competitiveness, enhancing infrastructure and affecting the everyday lives of citizens; observes that investments in infrastructure are more or less equivalent to investments in people, and that large transport projects are tangible examples of the EU budget’s impact and solidarity; notes, therefore, that effective monitoring and control

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2019)0242.

⁷ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0114.

⁸ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0164.

⁹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0144.

and sound financial management of this type of project is one of the keys to their successful implementation; welcomes the revision of the TEN-T aiming to build an effective, sustainable and multimodal transport network across Europe;

3. Understands that there is no generally agreed on definition, at either global or EU level, of what constitutes a large transport project; acknowledges that EU co-funded transport projects may have a regional, national or a cross-border dimension and that the total amounts invested in them vary greatly;
4. Underlines that Member States' transport networks cannot be looked at in isolation, since a Europe-wide transport network has been clearly acknowledged as a vision with benefits that go beyond isolated national action; stresses that proper connectivity within and between European regions is crucial, especially because of that the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, Russia's illegal and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine and the critical need to establish alternative logistics routes using various transport modes; notes, further, the impact that the war has had on inflation rates in the Union, particularly as a result of rising fuel and energy prices; underlines, in this regard, that high inflation hampers the financial soundness of transport projects; is concerned that the current social and political post-pandemic outlook, combined with the consequences of the war, poses a further threat to the timely completion and development of large projects and especially the core TEN-T network; highlights, therefore, that extending the European transport network corridors to neighbouring non-EU partner countries (such as Ukraine, Moldova, North Macedonia, Albania, etc.) would significantly improve the seamless functioning of the TEN-T network; calls, for Bulgaria and Romania to be swiftly integrated into the Schengen Area, as this would significantly improve north-south connectivity in Eastern Europe; calls on the Commission to support Ukraine and its efforts to strengthen rail connections between Ukraine and the EU with a view to the future integration of Ukraine's transport infrastructure into the TEN-T;
5. Underlines that the success of large transport infrastructure projects in the EU will depend to a large extent on how well the EU succeeds in connecting the infrastructure of the eastern Member States to that of the western Member States; highlights the key role of Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) funding in large infrastructure projects; stresses, in particular, the importance of expanding the TEN-T to encompass the EU's partners in the Eastern Neighbourhood, notably Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, and of increasing the budget allocation for military mobility;
6. Remarks that, through its TEN-T policy, the EU is aiming to build an effective EU-wide transport infrastructure network using EU funding programmes and initiatives, including the CEF, the European Fund for Strategic Investment, Horizon 2020, the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund; draws attention to the different management methods across different EU instruments and to the different responsible Directorates-General (DGs) within the Commission, necessitating a significant degree of coordination and shared management between Member States and the Commission (the DGs for Regional and Urban Policy) on the cohesion policy funds and direct management by the Commission of the TEN-T and the CEF under the responsibility of the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) on behalf of the DG for Mobility and Transport;

EU funding and implementation

7. Highlights that, since large transport projects are not defined as a separate category in the EU legal framework, there is no comprehensive data available on the amount of EU co-funding provided for such projects; remarks that over the 2007-2020 period, the EU budget allocated over EUR 109 billion to transport infrastructure projects on the TEN-T network, regardless of their size; remarks, furthermore, that alongside these programmes funded by the EU budget, the European Investment Bank provided roughly EUR 151 billion in loans for transport projects in the EU for the 2007-2020 period;
8. Highlights that the EU is currently experiencing an unprecedented situation whereby numerous sources of funding must be absorbed simultaneously and that Member States often do not have the administrative capacity to handle all the funding available from the Recovery and Resilience Facility through the national recovery and resilience plans, while trying to absorb EUR 392 billion of cohesion policy funding before the end of 2027; is concerned by the clear competition between the 2021-2027 cohesion funds and NextGenerationEU, as Member States have to prioritise funding instruments by their eligibility deadline; calls for synergies between cohesion funding and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (the largest instrument in the NextGenerationEU package), with coherence, convergence and coordination between the two, in order to increase the impact of investments on the ground and avoid double funding;
9. Highlights, further, that FAST (Flexible Assistance for Territories) – CARE is providing the opportunity to phase in delayed projects from the 2014-2020 period to the 2021-2027 period; draws attention, nevertheless, to the fact that the possible net reduction of the respective allocations in the current period is putting at risk the EU budget and its implementation;
10. Welcomes the number of high impact, successful projects co-financed by the EU budget; notes, in particular, the impact of projects such as: the construction of a high-speed railway platform (Spain, EUR 749 million); the doubling of the ‘Bari – S. Andrea-Bitetto’ railway section (Italy, EUR 421 million); the construction of a new Route du Littoral (France, EUR 304 million); the modernisation of the Elin Pelin – Kostenets railway section of the Sofia-Plovdiv railway line (Bulgaria, EUR 553 million); the construction of an express road between Craiova and Pitesti (Romania, EUR 832 million); the construction of the S7 expressway between Gdansk and Elbląg, and Thorns and Elbląg (Poland, EUR 504 million); the improvement of TEN-T road connectivity with South Dalmatia (Croatia, EUR 418 million); works on the MÚK Opatovice-Časy-Ostrov section of the D35 motorway (Czechia, EUR 384 million); the construction of the Patras Pyrgos motorway (Greece, EUR 355 million); the modernisation of the railway line between Púchov and Žilina (Slovakia, EUR 349 million); upgrades to the existing Maribor-Šentilj railway (Slovenia, EUR 195 million); the modernisation of the Ovar-Gaia railroad (Portugal, EUR 140 million); the construction of stage III of the western bypass of Vilnius (Lithuania, EUR 92 million); works on state road No 2, Tallinn-Tartu-Võru-Luhamaa Võõbu-Mäo (Estonia, EUR 59 million); the construction of the main state motorway, A2 (Riga-Sigulda-Estonian border) (Latvia, EUR 44 million); and the construction of a multi-level road junction at EA20A and EA21 along the TEN-T (Malta, EUR 41 million); points out, in addition,

the role that the European Investment Bank plays in supporting innovative and sustainable infrastructure projects in the Member States, both at national and local level;

Identified policy shortcomings and challenges

11. Recalls that, in the EU, the competence to implement projects lies with the Member States; highlights that the Commission has for this purpose appointed European coordinators to facilitate the implementation of all infrastructure projects along each of the nine core transport network corridors set out in the TEN-T Regulation; is concerned about the risk of misalignment between the EU's and Member States' strategic priorities and calls for the role of European coordinators to be strengthened in order to facilitate the deployment of infrastructure projects along the TEN-T corridors and to ensure cooperation and the smooth delivery of cross-border projects; underlines that any extension of the TEN-T network, whether maritime, river or road, should be done in coordination with the countries concerned; further recalls that Member States should ensure consistency between their national transport and investment plans and the EU's transport objectives in order to accelerate the implementation of large infrastructure transport projects and the finalisation of the TEN-T; stresses that projects within the Member States' national plans go hand in hand with projects that are aligned with the Union's transport objectives; calls on the Member States to give priority to completing the core TEN-T network in its entirety by 2030, rather than to completing the extended and the comprehensive networks; recalls the importance of increasing the connectivity of the network and the necessity of incentivising good cooperation among authorities at all levels from different Member States in reducing delays and costs in cases of misalignment of schedules and priorities;
12. Calls on the Commission to submit an annual implementation report to the European Parliament and national parliaments outlining progress on the completion of the TEN-T;
13. Stresses that the Commission should have a more prominent role in the oversight of project planning and implementation along transport network corridors, as Member States' priorities are often mainly determined by their national contexts and so may neglect cross-border sections where EU co-funded large infrastructure projects are located; highlights the risk of decreased utility derived from the use of EU funds if adequate performance is not achieved; believes that in order to address this issue, consistency between national transport plans and investments and EU priorities should be strengthened, as should the conditionality of EU funding on engagement with EU priorities in terms of transport infrastructure deployment;
14. Recalls that under the CEF, the Commission selects the infrastructure projects that will benefit from EU co-funding and determines the EU financial contribution on the basis of competitive periodical calls for proposals; is concerned about the risk of insufficient scrutiny of cost-benefit analyses (CBAs) during project selection; welcomes the fact that, since 2015, the Commission has had dedicated external experts carry out a specific assessment of each project's CBA; regrets that this assessment is sometimes solely based on the information contained in the project proposal; calls for the Commission to require promoters of large transport projects to submit the raw data and analyses used in their CBAs as part of their application in order to ensure adequate decision-making and use of EU funds;

15. Acknowledges that, according to the European Court of Auditors, large transport projects require significant implementation time and the average expected construction time for audited EU co-funded large transport projects up to 2020 was 15 years, with an average delay of 11 years; regrets that EU co-funded large infrastructure projects experience longer delays on average than comparable transport projects worldwide; highlights that this timeframe excludes the planning period, when projects can also receive EU co-funding for actions such as studies; notes that, as EU co-funding is organised around the seven-year multiannual financial framework (MFF) period, large transport projects are often co-funded via several subsequent grants, each requiring a new project proposal and selection process; is concerned that this leads to duplicated efforts by the project promoters and public authorities, increasing the administrative burden; notes with concern that such delays put the efficiency of EU co-funding at risk; urges the Member States to implement the Smart TEN-T Directive¹⁰ in order to enable simplified and harmonised permitting procedures and prevent delays in projects;
16. Urges the Member States to implement the Smart TEN-T Directive more effectively, particularly as regards cross-border sections in order to prevent them from becoming bottlenecks, as well as to prevent delays to the completion of the European transport corridors and the TEN-T; stresses that the Member States and project promoters should comply with the Smart TEN-T Directive in order to avoid delays and cost overruns and to ensure the timely completion of the TEN-T; calls, in this regard, for the permitting procedures, including environmental assessments, to be carried out according to the measures and shortened time frames of the directive;
17. Stresses, moreover, that many EU co-funded projects are subject to cost overruns compared to initial estimates at the project planning stage; highlights that this will become even more problematic in the post-COVID-19 environment and in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; points especially to the rising inflation rates and the increasing costs of construction and raw materials, and their impact on project budgets; draws attention to the fact that inflation represents an enormous risk to current and future infrastructure projects, which may be stalled due to the highly inflated prices of building and raw materials; calls for the CEF budget to be increased to meet the additional costs stemming from inflation, as well as to account for other geopolitical and transition needs and challenges affecting the implementation of the TEN-T, including cross-border sections;
18. Notes the significant delays in the adoption of partnership agreements (PAs) and programmes in the context of cohesion policy implementation in the current 2021-2027 programming period; remarks that the programmes should have been operational since January 2021; is concerned about the slow pace of implementation; acknowledges, however, that we have entered a new phase of implementation and that the Commission has so far approved 25 PAs; welcomes the fact that at least 142 programmes have been submitted in the context of cohesion policy as of 25 October 2022, and that this also constitutes a considerable step forward¹¹;

¹⁰ Directive (EU) 2021/1187 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 on streamlining measures for advancing the realisation of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) (OJ L 258, 20.7.2021, p. 1).

¹¹ European Commission, '[New Cohesion Policy](#)', accessed 3 May 2023.

19. Highlights the risk that outstanding commitments bear on the Union budget and may also generate significant decommitments, which in turn decrease the impact of the EU budget and hinder the planned transport infrastructure objectives of the Union; points to the specific negative impacts of under-execution of payments and implementation delays on large transport infrastructure projects; calls for the Commission to inform the budgetary authority about the factors contributing to this issue and the measures it has taken to address it;
20. Considers it very important that the MFF, as well as the national recovery plans, give stronger priority to infrastructure investments and the completion of the core TEN-T; regrets the strong disparities between Member States in terms of planned investments for transport infrastructure; recalls that if the military mobility budget was reduced from EUR 5.9 billion to EUR 1.69 billion; believes that, given the limited administrative capacity of the Member States, additional financing should be allocated for technical assistance at national and regional level to develop large-scale transport infrastructure projects; considers that the CEF should act as an effective financial incentive to bridge the gap between national interests and European transport priorities;
21. Calls for the Commission and the Member States to rapidly establish a financial framework to better foster and attract private investments for infrastructure projects, and to develop innovative financial arrangements, notably through blending mechanisms; calls for the next MFF for 2028-2035 to include a budget envelope dedicated to 'external transport' under the CEF III in order to increase cooperation with non-EU partners on cross-border projects and infrastructure deployment; believes that, given the current geopolitical reality, the EU's new priorities should be matched with additional money and should not come at the expense of other transport programmes and priorities;

Performance, accountability and monitoring

22. Highlights that the project monitoring performed by CINEA is mainly oriented towards financial aspects and outputs and does not focus on projects' broader results and impacts, including, but not limited to, those on the local population or the environment; calls on the Commission and CINEA to consider making use of more results-oriented goals and indicators to improve the potential for synergies between different funding programmes, as well as to better monitor project results;
23. Welcomes the fact that transparent, accountable and adequate monitoring and reporting measures, including measurable indicators, have been introduced in the new CEF; highlights that performance reporting systems must ensure that the data collected through monitoring of the implementation and results of the CEF can be used for in-depth analysis of the progress achieved, including for climate tracking, and that it is collected efficiently, effectively and in a timely manner;
24. Notes with concern that, while the Union produces systematic *ex post* evaluations of programmes, the Commission has not performed, nor has it required project promoters to perform, systematic *ex post* assessments of individual EU co-funded large transport projects; notes that there is currently no legal obligation for them to do so; highlights that these *ex post* assessments could increase transparency on the effectiveness of the

projects and generate lessons learnt for future large infrastructure projects; recommends that the Commission propose indicative definitions for large regional, national and cross-border infrastructure projects eligible for EU-funding, as there is no generally agreed on definition at either global or EU level of what constitutes a large transport project, to provide better focus for the competing project proposals, to add clarity to the data collection for approved projects and to further facilitate monitoring, control and evaluation activities;

Main priorities and recommendations

25. Believes that international experience as regards the financing and implementation of large infrastructure projects is worth analysing, and calls for the lessons from this analysis to be considered in the architecture of future policies (post-2027); points, in this regard, to examples of long-term financial support for large transport projects (Australia and Switzerland), risk-based monitoring systems for large transport projects (United States and Switzerland), and *ex post* evaluations of projects based on standardised indicators at the level of promoters (United States and Norway);
26. Believes especially that a systematic risk-based monitoring system for large transport projects would help to better address the significant delays of large transport infrastructure projects in the EU and would contribute to further improvements in managing cost overruns;
27. Is concerned by the administrative burden that requesting additional information and analysis for the selection process may put upon the project promoters; believes that a two-step approach whereby project promoters are invited to submit a comprehensive project proposal only once their expression of interest has been approved could be considered for the future programming period;
28. Encourages the Commission to consider a way in which it could be more visible in the stakeholder involvement process, which could be extremely beneficial in promoting the EU added value of large transport projects;
29. Is convinced that adequate control over fund implementation is a necessity as infrastructure projects are prone to irregularities including corruption; calls on the Commission and the Member States to put into mandatory use a single integrated, interoperable information and monitoring system, including a single data-mining and risk-scoring tool to access and analyse the relevant data, including information on beneficial ownership, and increase control reliability, with a view to a generalised application, including with the help of the Technical Support Instrument; emphasises that such data should allow for the strengthening of the control and audit processes, notably as regards fraud and conflicts of interest;
30. Notes that effective control depends on close cooperation between the EU anti-fraud stakeholders; calls for further collaboration between the European Public Prosecutor's Office and the European Anti-Fraud Office, with a view to improving monitoring and control systems in shared management and preventing possibilities for mismanagement of funds;

31. Expresses its concern that there is a lack of systematic evaluation of large transport projects in the EU and that existing monitoring is focused mainly on financial inputs and outputs rather than outcomes; calls for the outcomes of such projects to be given greater visibility, as they play a significant role in building long-term socioeconomic and environmental benefits; calls, additionally, for a review of the long-term benefits of large transport projects and for the evaluation of any benefits that are additional to the direct benefits produced by such projects¹²;
32. Calls on the Commission to further strengthen *ex post* evaluation indicators where possible by introducing criteria such as road safety; reduction of deaths and serious injuries; reduction of emissions, which would improve air quality; reduction of noise pollution; alleviation of other environmental disturbances; increase in economic activity in terms of income and employment benefits for the local population and businesses; time- and transport-cost benefits for people and freight; and other social benefits; notes, in this regard, that the lack of effective enforcement related to the quality of infrastructure is a significant additional contributor to poor road safety resulting in deaths and injuries; believes that measuring economic impacts through regional or national macroeconomic models could assist in alleviating any potential risks arising from the lack of scrutiny¹³; recognises the need for streamlined regulatory processes to ensure appropriate public consultation and environmental impact assessments, while ensuring that critical infrastructure projects are not unduly blocked; stresses the importance of performing a thorough socioeconomic cost-benefit analysis and environmental impact assessment using standardised methodology and the whole life-cycle approach for every large transport infrastructure project;
33. Calls for close alignment between the EU's and the Member States' strategic priorities; calls for the Commission to be given greater oversight over the planning and implementation of projects along transport network corridors; notes that, in many Member States, priority treatment is given to certain project categories based on their strategic importance, characterised by shorter timelines and simultaneous and/or simplified procedures; considers that, when such a framework exists within a national legal framework, it should automatically apply to projects on the TEN-T; calls for the Member States whose national legal frameworks lack such priority treatment to establish it for transport projects, with a view to limiting the administrative burden for project promoters and to ensuring a more seamless and efficient procedure; concludes that this could have a positive impact on accelerating large transport infrastructure projects; stresses that multiple, different and complex permit-granting procedures, cross-border procurement procedures and other procedures greatly hinder the timely implementation of projects and often result in significant delays and increased costs; highlights, in this regard, the benefits of having one designated authority for streamlining administrative procedures at national level;
34. Calls on the Commission to focus on the development of cross-border transport infrastructure to ensure better and greener connectivity in Europe; recommends increasing the availability of international night trains to provide sustainable transport alternatives;

¹² International Transport Forum, [Major Transport Infrastructure Projects and Economic Development](#), ITF Round Tables, No 154, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2014.

¹³ Ibid.

35. Is concerned that long waiting times at internal EU borders negatively affect EU-funded infrastructure and decrease its overall usability, with impacts on cities and citizens, air quality and noise pollution, as well as an increased risk of road accidents, while compromising working conditions for drivers; calls, therefore, for the establishment of an EU-wide standard of one minute on average for the processing and control of EU registered heavy-duty vehicles at EU borders in order to help facilitate optimal usage of transport infrastructure and networks; calls further for the prioritisation of cross-border interconnectivity projects aimed at removing bottlenecks, addressing missing links, identifying strategic segments and enhancing cross-border connectivity and projects for interconnectivity, as well as of different transport modes to promote multimodality and sustainability; considers that cross-border and missing-link projects provide the highest European added value and stresses that their urgent realisation is of the highest priority; calls additionally on the Member States to use lessons learnt from ongoing TEN-T projects when considering new infrastructure projects funded by the EU and to share best practices and relevant information in a timely and effective manner, with the ultimate aim of improving the implementation of transport infrastructure projects;
36. Calls for the European Cross-Border Mechanism to be swiftly adopted, as it would improve the efficiency of EU investments in cross-border transport infrastructure;
37. Calls on the Commission to establish a European fast track for the infrastructure projects along the core and comprehensive TEN-T network; considers that the fast track should comprise three pillars:
- Binding *ex ante* consultations between the Member States and the Commission, prior to the submission of the projects application forms, which should shorten the procedure time by allowing the Member States to address potential negative observations by the Commission as early as possible;
 - An accelerated environmental impact assessment and approval procedure by the Commission to further reduce application-to-implementation times;
 - Common EU-wide minimum standards for financial and economic assessment of the projects (i.e. economic viability, maturity, return on investment), which should ensure clarity and uniformity and work to minimise any potential issues arising from the carrying out of audits;
38. Calls for the recognition of specific added value in projects contributing to the much-needed harmonisation of alternative fuels infrastructure deployment across the Union; calls for a swift agreement on and the implementation of the proposed regulation on alternative fuels infrastructure¹⁴;
39. Proposes that contingency measures and funding flexibility be considered in order to allow for the continued implementation and completion of key projects in the event of force majeure or crisis situations, taking into account general project duration; proposes

¹⁴ Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure, and repealing Directive 2014/94/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (COM(2021)0559).

introducing appropriate indexing or other models to adjust the costs of construction and raw materials in line with the rate of inflation;

◦

◦ ◦

40. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

Large transport infrastructure projects in the EU – implementation of projects and monitoring and control of EU funds
(2022/2021(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion (*): Colm Markey

(*) Associated committee – Rule 57 of the Rules of Procedure

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Transport and Tourism calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the findings of the European Court of Auditors Review No 05/2021 on the EU framework for large transport infrastructure projects: an international comparison; notes that the review identified four specific challenges for the Commission concerning large transport projects: insufficient cost-benefit analysis, high administrative burden, lack of a risk-based approach in monitoring and insufficient alignment between EU and national transport strategies; recalls the need for the Commission and the Member States to take the recommendations of the Court of Auditors fully into account in order to speed up the deployment of large infrastructure projects;
2. Highlights that certain Member States underperform regarding the implementation and maintenance of large infrastructure projects, especially in coordinating, selecting, monitoring and evaluating infrastructure projects;
3. Calls on the Commission to use a risk-based approach when monitoring EU co-funded projects, in line with the findings of the Court of Auditors' report;
4. Regrets the fact that the Court of Auditors found that many EU co-funded projects were subject to cost overruns and significant delays compared to initial estimates at the project planning stage; notes that the average budget overrun was more than EUR 2 billion per project, or an increase of 47 % on initial estimates; regrets, further, the fact that the audit found that the average delay to the EU co-funded projects studied was an unacceptable 11 years and calls on the Commission to reform the process of selecting, planning and implementing EU-funded projects in order to avoid significant cost and time overruns, to achieve the sound and efficient use of public money and to meet the deadlines set out in the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) and the relevant funding schemes; requests also that the Commission monitor large infrastructure projects jointly with the Court of Auditors;

5. Welcomes Directive (EU) 2021/1187 on streamlining measures for advancing the realisation of the TEN-T (the Smart TEN-T Directive)¹⁵ and urges the Member States to implement it more effectively, particularly regarding cross-border sections, in order to prevent them from becoming bottlenecks and delays to the completion of the European transport corridors and the TEN-T;
6. Considers that the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) should act as an effective financial incentive to bridge the gap between national interests and European transport priorities, contributing to aligning the priority levels and timelines, in particular of cross-border projects or segments, while ensuring, at the same time, a fair distribution of funding; regrets the fact that neither the multiannual financial framework (MFF) nor national recovery plans strongly promote infrastructure investments or prioritise the completion of the TEN-T; regrets the major disparities between Member States in terms of investments planned for transport infrastructure; calls on the Commission and the Member States to rapidly establish a financial framework to better foster and attract investments in infrastructure projects and to develop innovative financial arrangements, in particular through blending mechanisms in order to leverage private investments;
7. Calls for the CEF budget to be significantly increased and enhanced to meet the ambition and aggregated financial and investment needs required to complete the TEN-T in due time, as well as to cover the additional costs stemming from the reinforcement and enlargement of the TEN-T, particularly in cross-border sections, and the integration of military mobility, the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 crisis and high inflation; notes that the current MFF reflects the priorities of the Union at the time of its adoption in 2020 and stresses that since then the geopolitical situation in Europe has changed and the MFF requires further adjustment;
8. Highlights the key role of CEF funding in large infrastructure projects; recognises the strategic value of the TEN-T and the CEF for meeting new objectives as regards the EU sustainable and smart mobility strategy, which complements the TEN-T and the trans-European energy network (TEN-E), and as regards enhanced military mobility in the EU and stronger connectivity with the Union's strategic partners; stresses, in particular, the importance of extending the TEN-T to encompass our partners in the Eastern Neighbourhood and increase the military mobility budgetary envelope, with particular attention to enhancing the strategic infrastructure segments of the transport network in order to support their dual use for military and civilian purposes and thereby increase the Union's resilience;
9. Highlights the fact that, while the realisation of the TEN-T will foster growth, jobs and cohesion throughout the Union and help it meet its socio-economic and climate goals, investments estimated at EUR 500 billion are needed to complete the TEN-T core network by 2030 and EUR 1.5 trillion for the entire TEN-T by 2050; highlights the fact that the revision of Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the TEN-T could result in a need for additional investments;
10. Stresses that Russia's illegal and unjustified war against Ukraine poses considerable challenges for the EU transport and tourism sector; notes, further, the impact that the war has had on inflation rates in the Union as a result of rising fuel and energy prices;

¹⁵ OJ L 258, 20.7.2021, p. 1.

underlines, in this regard, that high inflation hampers the financial soundness and achievement of transport projects; calls for a coordinated response from the Union alongside increased funding in order to address these issues and to avoid any delays in the implementation of large infrastructure projects; calls on the Commission to propose a methodology for assessing and adjusting the projects' costs and their financing, which includes, for example, the impacts of the overlapping energy, geopolitical and climate crises;

11. Calls, further, on the Commission to carry out an assessment of the economic and social consequences of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine on all modes of transport in the EU and to present a proposal with legislative and/or financial measures within the MFF in order to mitigate the negative effects;
12. Notes the Commission's intention to use the CEF to support interoperability and connectivity projects linking the EU and Ukrainian transport networks; asks that a separate envelope for solidarity lanes between the EU and Ukraine be established; stresses the need to increase the current CEF budget for the period 2021-2027 and calls for the creation, in the next MMF (2028-2035), of an additional budget envelope dedicated to 'external transport' in the CEF III, in order to increase cooperation with non-EU countries regarding cross-border projects and infrastructure deployment;
13. Stresses the strategic importance of frontloading the CEF to ensure that the earmarked money is utilised by the end of the current programming period;
14. Believes that, given the current geopolitical reality, the EU's new priorities should be matched with additional money and should not come at the expense of other transport programmes and priorities; stresses that in order to ensure the completion of the TEN-T on schedule, it is essential that the level of funding, including Union funding, matches the ambition and the aggregated financial needs of the infrastructure projects; asks that CEF funding for transport priorities be increased and ring-fenced; opposes the budget reallocations and cuts by the Commission, which is taking funding away from funding programmes established in the MFF and allocating it to new instruments, such as the reallocation of EUR 400 million from the CEF to the to the European Chips Act within the digital Europe programme; stresses that the CEF transport funds must be used solely for transport-related initiatives;
15. Calls for the European structural and investment funds to focus more on transport investments, for the CEF's efficient strategies to be replicated, for synergies to be sought between the governance of the European structural and investment funds and the CEF, which has demonstrated its great efficiency, and for the selection of projects with high European added value;
16. Recognises the need for greater investment in timely pre-feasibility studies and feasibility studies, scoping, detailed design and public consultation and participation in the early project stages to avoid costly delays at the later planning and construction phases and to address public concerns and mitigate the bases for serial and spurious objections that serve to unjustifiably delay the process; stresses the need to screen objections to ensure that any concerns raised are valid;

17. Takes note of the Commission communication on RePower EU and its intention to establish 'go-to' areas with simplified permit-granting procedures for critical energy infrastructure; notes that a similar concept could be extended to critical transport infrastructure projects; highlights the fact that in many Member States, priority treatment is given to certain project categories based on their strategic importance, characterised by shorter timelines and simultaneous and/or simplified procedures; considers that when such a framework exists within a national legal framework, this should automatically apply to projects on the TEN-T; calls for Member States whose national legal frameworks do not provide for priority treatment to establish it for transport projects;
18. Recognises the need for streamlined regulatory processes to ensure appropriate public consultation and environmental impact assessments while ensuring that critical infrastructure projects are not unduly blocked; calls on the Member States to enforce the timelines set in the Smart TEN-T Directive for those regulatory processes in order to avoid unnecessary delays;
19. Stresses the need for the Member States to put in place a simplified harmonised permit-granting procedure, including for environmental assessments; notes that shorter timelines, simultaneous procedures and limited timeframes for the assessment of appeals have been indicated as necessary measures for a more efficient system at national level; calls on the Member States to establish a simplified common procedure with a view to limiting the administrative burden for project promoters and ensuring a more seamless and efficient procedure, without compromising the Union's standards on environmental protection and public participation under any circumstances;
20. Stresses that multiple, different and complex permit-granting procedures, cross-border procurement procedures and other procedures greatly hinder the timely implementation of projects and often result in significant delays and increased costs; highlights, in this regard, the benefits of having one designated authority for streamlining the administrative procedures at national level; recalls that the Smart TEN-T Directive requires the Member States to implement a single point of contact procedure in order to reduce the complexity, improve the efficiency and increase the transparency of the procedures;
21. Stresses that the Member States and project promoters should comply with the Smart TEN-T Directive in order to avoid delays and cost overruns and to ensure the timely completion of the TEN-T; in this regard, calls for the permit-granting procedures, including environmental assessments, to be carried out in accordance with the measures and shortened time frames of the directive;
22. Notes that *ex post* evaluation is an important tool for providing insights into the decision-making process, performance and outcomes of transport infrastructure projects and for informing the public; calls for systematic *ex post* evaluation of the large transport projects co-funded by the EU by recognised, independent third parties following the criteria of coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and European added value, including an updated cost-benefit analysis, and asks that it be ensured that these evaluations feed into procedures for future projects;

23. Recalls that maintenance is of paramount importance to ensure long-term high-quality properly functioning transport projects; highlights the fact that periodical and regular maintenance saves money over the lifetime of a project; calls for the proper maintenance of completed large infrastructure projects; calls on the Member States and project promoters to budget for maintenance costs during the planning stages for the lifetime of infrastructure projects; insists that this requirement should be a precondition for receiving funding under the CEF;
24. Calls on the Member States to use lessons learned from ongoing TEN-T projects when considering new infrastructure projects funded by the EU and to share best practices and relevant information in a timely and effective manner, with the ultimate aim of improving the implementation of transport infrastructure projects;
25. Strongly believes that large projects involving the modernisation and upgrading of infrastructure on all transport modes, such as the electrification of the core rail network, will ensure European added value in terms of connectivity, climate and digital goals;
26. Urges the Member States to give completing the core TEN-T network in its entirety by 2030 priority over the completion of the extended and the comprehensive networks, while also ensuring the timely completion of the comprehensive network; calls for national projects that are not aligned with the TEN-T priorities not to be considered as a priority for receiving European funds;
27. Calls for alignment and coordination between the EU priorities and the national plans for transport infrastructure; stresses that the Member States should ensure coherence between the TEN-T Regulation and their national transport and investment plans; stresses that projects within the Member States' national plans should not be prioritised over projects that are aligned with the Union's transport objectives; highlights that EU funding and financial instruments financing large infrastructure projects should be used to promote broader European connectivity rather than to prioritise or protect national interests;
28. Calls for the prioritisation of cross-border interconnectivity projects aimed at removing bottlenecks, addressing missing links, identifying strategic segments and enhancing cross-border connectivity and projects for interconnectivity and for different transport modes promoting multimodality and sustainability; considers that cross-border and missing-links projects provide the highest European added value and stresses that their urgent achievement is of the highest priority;
29. Recalls the importance of increasing the connectivity of the network, which depends on interconnecting projects which are often implemented by several Member States along one corridor; highlights, further, the necessity to emphasise and incentivise good cooperation between authorities at all levels from different Member States in reducing delays and costs in cases of misalignment of schedules and priorities; calls for the strengthening of the role of the TEN-T coordinators in ensuring cooperation and the smooth delivery of cross-border projects and the deployment of infrastructure projects along the corridors;

30. Calls for stronger synergies across all modes of transport; notes the lack of airport and port connectivity by train in many Member States and calls for multimodal connectivity to TEN-T core ports and airports to be addressed;
31. Recognises that transport and energy systems are interconnected; calls on the Commission to ensure that the TEN-E is compatible, where applicable, with the TEN-T, as well as with the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation, in order to foster synergies between the networks and ensure that there are no gaps in the support architecture, in order to deliver strategic energy independence; calls for a large-scale deployment of recharging and refuelling infrastructure along the TEN-T in order to meet the Union's climate goals and to achieve a comprehensive approach to public spending on alternative fuels infrastructure; recognises the importance of the availability and delivery of substantial amounts of green energy for the successful decarbonisation of the transport sector;
32. Underlines the need to promote synergies between the TEN-T and the TEN-E in order to significantly increase the production, supply and storage of renewable energy in the Union;
33. Highlights the potential of ports in wind-energy production for the creation of renewable fuel; recognises the synergistic role that the TEN-E and the TEN-T can play in realising this potential;
34. Notes the short-term necessity to import liquefied natural gas as a transitional fuel;
35. Calls on the Commission to submit an annual implementation report to the European and national parliaments outlining progress on the completion of the TEN-T, as well as the reasons for any delays; calls on the Commission to include a chapter on all projects funded by the CEF, on a country-by-country basis, which are facing delays of more than two years; calls for the Member States to identify the causes of delays and to propose action to ensure the speedy resolution of these issues; considers that unjustified significant delays should result in a reduction in or the withdrawal of grants under the CEF;
36. Calls on the Commission to introduce a legislative framework in order to create a Single European Digital Enforcement Area in order to enable the responsible enforcement authorities to conduct targeted risk-based checks and inspections of commercial transport by road;
37. Calls on the Commission to ensure that large transport infrastructure projects are aligned with the objectives of the European Green Deal and the sustainable and smart mobility strategy and contribute to the sustainability, safety, accessibility and interoperability of transport, as well as to job creation in the sector;
38. Stresses the importance of performing a thorough socio-economic cost-benefit analysis and environmental impact assessment with standardised methodology using the whole life-cycle approach for every large transport infrastructure project;
39. Highlights the need for significant investment at European and national levels to decarbonise the transport sector, in line with the principle of technological neutrality,

and to support the deployment of innovative transport solutions and modal shift, zero- and low-emission mobility solutions; highlights, in this regard, the need to ensure the roll-out of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), both on board and trackside, and of alternative fuels in order to address congestion and air pollution; emphasises, further, that investments are necessary to improve the safety, efficiency and accessibility of transport, as well as to increase the resilience of transport infrastructure to climatic and geopolitical hazards;

40. Highlights the need to prioritise smart and sustainable transport projects and to significantly increase capacity and interoperability in smart and sustainable modes of transport, including active mobility; considers that European policies and support should take the facilitation of cycling into due account when building or upgrading the TEN-T infrastructure, while the development of the EuroVelo network should be supported;
41. Asks the Commission to fully recognise the European added value of the EuroVelo transport network and to dedicate a larger portion of transport funding to active mobility infrastructure such as cycling infrastructure;
42. Notes that alternative fuels, electrical grid infrastructure and an increased supply of sustainable energy are critical to meeting the objectives of the Green Deal and strategic independence;
43. Stresses the urgent need to complete the deployment of the ERTMS on interconnected rail systems by 2030; highlights that this process has been under way for more than 20 years and calls on the Member States with interconnected rail systems to explain the delays and immediately put forward national plans to deploy the ERTMS; recalls the exemption for Member States with an isolated network;
44. Welcomes the Commission's RePowerEU plan and asks it to address issues relating to the supply of renewable transport fuels and rising transport and energy costs and to improve energy independence in the Union;
45. Calls for the recognition of specific added value in projects contributing to the much-needed harmonisation of alternative fuels infrastructure deployment across the Union; calls for a swift agreement on and the implementation of the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation;
46. Recognises the potential of maritime seaports as the clean energy hubs of the future and important facilitators of the energy transition across Europe; notes that in this role, maritime seaports will be essential to achieving the EU's climate objectives for 2030 and 2050, as well as the ambitions outlined in the REPowerEU plan; stresses that maritime seaports are increasingly assuming new responsibilities and are involved in new services, such as sustainable energy production, research on the blue economy, and military mobility; notes that in their role as multi-service actors, maritime seaports can substantially contribute to a sustainable, digital and resilient European economy;
47. Recognises the need to ensure the connectivity of countries and regions, including, in particular, underdeveloped, remote, insular and outermost countries and regions, as well as those impacted by the illegal, unjustified Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and/or

Brexit; also recognises the need to cease cooperation on transport with Russia and Belarus;

48. Recognises the importance of the TEN-T for improved connectivity with strategic partners in non-EU countries; calls on the Commission to strengthen cross-border connections with partners in Eastern Neighbourhood and European Free Trade Association countries and the United Kingdom; calls, in this regard, for the swift integration of Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen Area, as this would significantly improve north-south connectivity in Eastern Europe;
49. Recalls the Commission communication of 12 May 2022 on solidarity lanes, which outlines several transport infrastructure challenges facing the EU and its neighbours; highlights the importance of addressing these challenges in order to support global food security and the recovery of the Ukrainian economy; stresses that the communication proposed assessing the extension of the European transport corridors into Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova; calls on the Commission to support Ukraine and its efforts to strengthen rail connections between Ukraine and the EU with a view to the future integration of the Ukrainian transport facilities into the TEN-T.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	21.3.2023
Result of final vote	+: 31 -: 0 0: 9
Members present for the final vote	Magdalena Adamowicz, Andris Ameriks, Erik Bergkvist, Karolin Braunsberger-Reinhold, Ciarán Cuffe, Jakop G. Dalunde, Karima Delli, Ismail Ertug, Gheorghe Falcă, Carlo Fidanza, Jens Gieseke, Elsi Katainen, Elena Kountoura, Peter Lundgren, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Tilly Metz, Caroline Nagtegaal, Philippe Olivier, Rovana Plumb, Bergur Løkke Rasmussen, Dominique Riquet, Massimiliano Salini, Vera Tax, Achille Variati, Petar Vitanov, Lucia Vuolo, Kosma Złotowski
Substitutes present for the final vote	Tom Berendsen, Sara Cerdas, Leila Chaibi, Nicola Danti, Andor Deli, Markus Ferber, Valter Flego, Maria Grapini, Andrey Novakov, Andreas Schieder
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Asim Ademov, Moritz Körner

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

31	+
ECR	Carlo Fidanza, Kosma Zlotowski
PPE	Magdalena Adamowicz, Asim Ademov, Tom Berendsen, Karolin Braunsberger-Reinhold, Gheorghe Falcă, Markus Ferber, Jens Gieseke, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Andrey Novakov, Massimiliano Salini, Lucia Vuolo
Renew	Nicola Danti, Valter Flego, Elsi Katainen, Moritz Körner, Caroline Nagtegaal, Bergur Løkke Rasmussen, Dominique Riquet
S&D	Andris Ameriks, Erik Bergkvist, Sara Cerdas, Ismail Ertug, Maria Grapini, Rovana Plumb, Andreas Schieder, Vera Tax, Achille Variati, Petar Vitanov

0	-

9	0
ECR	Peter Lundgren
ID	Philippe Olivier
NI	Andor Deli
The Left	Leila Chaibi, Elena Kountoura
Verts/ALE	Ciarán Cuffe, Jakop G. Dalunde, Karima Delli, Tilly Metz

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	25.4.2023
Result of final vote	+ : 24 - : 0 0 : 3
Members present for the final vote	Gilles Boyer, Joachim Stanisław Brudziński, Olivier Chastel, Caterina Chinnici, Ilana Cicurel, Corina Crețu, José Manuel Fernandes, Luke Ming Flanagan, Daniel Freund, Isabel García Muñoz, Monika Hohlmeier, Jean-François Jalkh, Mislav Kolakušić, Joachim Kuhs, Alin Mituța, Jan Olbrycht, Eleni Stavrou, Angelika Winzig, Lara Wolters, Tomáš Zdechovský
Substitutes present for the final vote	Maria Grapini, Niclas Herbst, Andrey Novakov, Mikuláš Peksa, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Attila Ara-Kovács, Antonio Maria Rinaldi

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

24	+
ECR	Joachim Stanisław Brudziński
ID	Antonio Maria Rinaldi
NI	Mislav Kolakušić
PPE	José Manuel Fernandes, Niclas Herbst, Monika Hohlmeier, Andrey Novakov, Jan Olbrycht, Eleni Stavrou, Angelika Winzig, Tomáš Zdechovský
Renew	Gilles Boyer, Olivier Chastel, Ilana Cicurel, Alin Mituța
S&D	Attila Ara-Kovács, Caterina Chinnici, Corina Crețu, Isabel García Muñoz, Maria Grapini, Lara Wolters
Verts/ALE	Daniel Freund, Mikuláš Peksa, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel

0	-

3	0
ID	Jean-François Jalkh, Joachim Kuhs
The Left	Luke Ming Flanagan

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention