



2023/2129(DEC)

23.01.2024

OPINION

of the Committee on Transport and Tourism

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2022, Section III – Commission and executive agencies
(2023/2129(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Petar Vitanov

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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 ('the Court') that the consolidated accounts of the EU for 2022 present fairly, in all material respects, the EU's financial position; regrets that the level of error for budget expenditure increased from 3 % to 4.2 %; notes that this level of error stems mainly from the heading 'Cohesion, resilience and values'; points out that, in line with the Court's assessment, the errors are both material and pervasive and that their higher rates correlate with more complicated rules;
2. Notes that the implementation of the 2022 budget was still partly impacted by the late adoption of the MFF Regulation, high inflation and higher interest payments of NGEU related to overall higher interest rates brought upon by soaring inflation; furthermore, points out that it was heavily affected by illegal and unjustified Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as well as the need to provide complex humanitarian and financial support;
3. Notes that the final budget for commitment appropriations of EUR 182.2 bln. – above the MFF ceiling of EUR 179.8 bln. – was made possible by the use of special instruments, such as the Flexibility Instrument, the Brexit Adjustment Reserve, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve, for amounts over and above the ceilings of the 7-year financial framework (maximum EUR 21.1 bln. in 2018 prices for the 7-year MFF);
4. Highlights that, under the RRF, some milestones and targets lacked clarity or did not cover all key implementation stages of the measure; calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve the utilisation of the RRF funding and implementation of the national plans as well as the control in order to ensure the best usage and value added of those funds, especially in the transport and tourism sector;
5. Calls on the Commission to ensure that there is additional advisory support to the national authorities of the Member States in order to navigate simultaneous funding related to absorbing funds from several instruments at the same time, namely closing the remaining ESIF programmes from the 2014–2020 MFF, considering that the implementation of the 2021–2027 shared management funds under CPR has also begun, albeit with a delay; regrets that the late adoption of the legislation for the shared management funds from the 2021–2027 MFF and the parallel implementation of several instruments resulted in pressure on administrative resources leading to delays in approval of all partnership agreements with the Member States and of most of the programmes; notes at the same time that most of the Member States have reached the implementation phase of NGEU financing; stresses that, alongside all this, they need to pursue measures introduced in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, such as CARE and FAST-CARE, causing the Member States on losing funding;

6. Acknowledges that, in 2022, CEF reached its full implementation phase and deems it an achievement; regrets the decrease, compared to 2021, in funding for calls for proposals under the CEF Transport 2022 funding instrument on projects targeting new, upgraded and improved European transport infrastructure; takes notice that CEF Transport 2022 calls that were launched during the 3rd quarter of 2022 opened additional funding possibilities with an extra EUR 6 bln. of EU co-funding; insists that a sufficiently high CEF Transport budget line is key to ensuring implementation of the TEN-T network, including the enlargement in the Eastern region to provide connection to the Eastern partners such as Ukraine, greening of European transport, increased military mobility and offsetting the unprecedentedly high inflation rates;
7. Notes that 2022 was the second year of Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme supporting transport research and innovation in 2021–2027 MFF; welcomes the successful completion of 3 major transport calls in January, April and September, for EUR 122 mln., EUR 253 mln. and EUR 91 mln. respectively, that led to new transport research and innovation projects in the areas of road, aviation and waterborne transport, as well as on infrastructures, multimodal network / traffic management, logistics and new mobility services;
8. Highlights that connectivity is crucial for cohesion and even more so for the Member States at the periphery of the Single Market; therefore, believes that it is fundamental for the EU to play a leading role in fostering a global level playing field in the aviation and maritime sectors;
9. Reiterates that mobility is a right of European citizens; therefore, stresses that it is critical that mobility and transport are available, interconnected, efficient and affordable for all and that all EU transport policies are designed in accordance with this essential principle; maintains that nobody can be left behind, that rural and remote regions need to be better connected, furthermore, that transport and mobility have to be accessible for persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities;
10. Notes that 2022 was the inaugural year of the implementation of the New Urban Mobility Framework, an integral component of the Efficient and Green Mobility package, to improve urban mobility; points out that DG MOVE has taken proactive measures, including the establishment of a reformed Commission expert group on urban mobility, and prepared the Commission's Recommendation on National Support Programmes for Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning; welcomes the fact that throughout 2022, a series of meticulously organized communication events were executed with the express purpose of advancing awareness on and understanding of Urban Mobility initiatives; however, observes with concern that this Framework does not recognise that all modes of transport have their role to play and that every citizen has a right to choose the mode of transport according to their preferences and needs;
11. Endorses the work of European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) in effectively managing its delegated programmes and supporting DG MOVE in achieving its strategic objectives as per the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy;
12. Welcomes the Commission's willingness to explore the benefits and possibilities of new transport modes, such as Hyperloop;

13. Commends the legislative work of DG MOVE to contribute to the climate goals of the Union, such as FuelEU Maritime, AFIR or Refuel Aviation; regrets however that the proposals of the Greening Transport Package, such as the Weights and Dimensions or the Combined Transport, are delayed;
14. Calls for the preparation of the revision of the regulatory framework for: a) rail, to remove the existing regulatory obstacles so that it can be a competitive alternative, with a particular emphasis on provisions on capacity management that are necessary to better suit the needs of freight services and to regulate technical and operational standards that are currently national; b) both combined transport, enlarging its scope to intermodal transport, and road-only transport; notes that these revisions should aim to reduce the diverging implementation by the Member States, to include provisions on the digitalisation of information flows, and to reinforce the incentives for intermodal transport;
15. Calls for cross-border and multi-country projects and to simplify, accelerate and harmonise digitalisation and the regulatory process for infrastructure projects, especially for cross-border interconnections and bottlenecks;
16. Points out that continued and increasing public investment in ensuring large scale infrastructure, especially the TEN-T network, is key to providing interconnectivity, boosting of economic growth and benefitting fully from the opportunities of the Single Market; stresses the importance of finalizing the core TEN-T network by 2030; calls on the Commission to provide the Member States with clear guidelines on how to perform the market study and how to draw up a terminal development plan, with particular regard to cross-border aspects and along the Core Network Corridors; stresses the importance of setting up a target implementation date within 12 months after entry into force of the new TEN-T regulation;
17. Underlines that funding of the TEN-T network revision shall well reflect and further focus on the extension of connection towards the Eastern Neighbourhood; in this regard insists on not delaying the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen Area any longer to ensure seamless transport connection to the East;
18. Welcomes the agreement reached on 30 December 2023 by the EU Member States on lifting air and maritime internal border controls with Romania and Bulgaria; urges the Commission to analyse all possible options to defend the right of Romanian and Bulgarian citizens to free movement, ensuring seamless road transport and mobility between Romania and Bulgaria and the rest of the Union to make certain that the Single Market works for all; underlines that the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area is essential, as an enlarged Schengen area without internal border controls will make the EU stronger; emphasises that the prolongation of the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area for road transport can lead to the anti-European sentiment in these countries and, in turn, to a decline in confidence in the EU project and its institutions; highlights that the current situation goes against one of the main European principles of free movement; urges in this regard the Commission to analyse all possible procedures to defend the right to free movement of Romanian and Bulgarian citizens;

19. Notes that all citizens of Romania and Bulgaria are discriminated against because they face delays, excessive bureaucratic burden and additional costs when travelling for the purposes of tourism, work, studying or doing business abroad, compared to their counterparts from the Schengen countries; stresses that identity checks raise trade costs for goods by approximately 0.4 % to 0.9 % of the value of trade at every Schengen border, while even higher costs apply to trade in services; stresses that trade costs for the entire Schengen area amount to EUR 6.5–13 bln. per year;
20. Welcomes ECA’s Special report 13/2022 “Free movement in the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic - Limited scrutiny of internal border controls, and uncoordinated actions by Member States”¹; urges both the Commission and the Member States to diligently implement the recommendations delineated therein, including closer scrutiny of border controls, the establishment of streamlined procedures for data collection on restrictions, and the provision of more actionable guidance on implementation; further recalls the role of the ECDC in enhancing the oversight of the implementation of its guidance;
21. Welcomes the adoption by the Commission of an amended proposal, in line with its ‘Solidarity Lanes’, for the revised TEN-T Regulation in June 2022, which aims to strengthen the links with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, by extending four European Transport Corridors to these neighbouring countries; welcomes that on 11 November 2022, the Commission, Czechia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the World Bank Group published a Joint Declaration announcing the pooling of EUR 1 bln. for the Solidarity Lanes to enhance the capacity of these transport corridors; commends the dedicated calls within CEF Transport 2022 launched to support the projects that aim at improving transport infrastructure along the Solidarity Lanes and at Border Crossing Points (BCPs) between the EU and Ukraine and Moldova, stressing that continued help and support to Ukraine is of uttermost importance; in this regard also welcomes the signature of the three grant agreements under the CEF Transport worth almost EUR 45 mln. to improve transport connections between Moldova and Romania along the TEN-T network, as the projects will modernise transport infrastructure at the road border crossing points Ungheni, Albița Leușeni, and Reni-Giurgiulești-Galați; notes that these investments will strengthen the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes – the routes used since Russia's blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports to transport Ukraine's and Moldova's exports and imports;
22. Welcomes the substantive contribution of DG MOVE to the subsequent packages of the sanctions against Russia and Belarus; recalls that in aviation, they covered both flights of Russian owned, operated or controlled aircraft in the EU airspace and the export of aviation goods to Russia or support to the use of such goods by Russia, to inhibit Russia’s international connectivity and hamper Russia’s aviation industry;
23. Applauds the initiative of the European Air Traffic Management Voluntary Solidarity Fund for Ukraine and Moldova under the responsibility of Eurocontrol, aiming to sustain staff/training costs and any other costs to ensure operational readiness when air traffic recovers; furthermore, welcomes another Eurocontrol solidarity mechanism to assist the front-line states struggling with the effects of a sharp drop in air traffic; points out that

¹ https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR22_13/SR_free-movement-phase-I_EN.pdf

the Eurocontrol Member States decided to establish two specific funds: one in the form of a donation to Ukraine and Moldova of EUR 46.5 mln. and one in the form of a loan of EUR 46.1 mln. to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland;

24. Commends the Commission's legislative proposals in the field of transport to help Ukraine during the unjustified illegal war of Russian aggression such as the proposal for a Regulation regarding Ukrainian driving licences including the driving licence for professional drivers;
25. Welcomes that Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia obtained the observer status in the Regional Steering Committee of the Transport Community Treaty (TCT) in November 2022;
26. Welcomes the Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0 presented by the Commission, which builds on the success of the first action plan of 2018; highlights that the 2022 action plan broadens the scope of Military Mobility by addressing the threats and challenges emerging within the new security landscape;
27. Points out that the EU Member States largely use the same transport infrastructure for both civilian and military movements and transportation; highlights that at the heart of military mobility is the need to upgrade the dual use transport infrastructure along the military mobility network – comprising multi-modal transport routes connected by logistical hubs – so that it is capable of handling potentially heavy and large-scale military transports at short notice; notes therefore that strengthening of the dual-use transport infrastructure across the TEN-T involves the development of multi-modal transport corridors and transport nodes; considers that, as a result, development of the dual-use transport infrastructure through co-funding from the CEF funding instrument continues to be an essential pillar of this Action Plan; points out that, in accordance with the Strategic Compass, the EU will continue strengthening the dual-use transport infrastructure across the trans-European transport network in order to promote rapid and seamless movement of military personnel, material and equipment for operational deployments and exercises, working in close cooperation with NATO and other partners;
28. Welcomes that the Commission accelerated the evaluation for the CEF 2021 Military Mobility call and anticipated by several months the 2022 Military Mobility funding opportunities; notes that this triggered the faster award of almost EUR 1 bln. of CEF funds to the key dual use infrastructural components, covering all transport modes and helping the deployment of the dual use infrastructure, for instance, improving technical parameters for railway bridges and tunnels, upgrading the airport infrastructure for civilian-military traffic, and adapting technical specifications for port infrastructures; welcomes the Commission's engagement to redeploy funding envisaged for the short-term defence instrument; takes notice of the funding from the European Defence Fund and the proposal to enhance the Union's strategic transport infrastructures to make them fit for military mobility; further calls on the Commission to ensure a clear commitment as well as to find and present solutions to sufficiently increase the military mobility budget line beyond the Flexibility Instrument, in order to strengthen European security and to include military mobility infrastructure within the TEN-T; points out that the identification of the gaps and bottlenecks in the physical transport infrastructure in the

Member States, which might hamper short notice and large-scale deployments of military forces, will be assessed in 2023;

29. Welcomes action taken by the Commission in December 2022 to speed up the financing of 35 military mobility projects along the TEN-T; notes that accelerated evaluation of the CEF 2021 Military Mobility call triggered the faster award of almost EUR 1 bln. of CEF funds to key dual use infrastructural components;
30. Recalls the Court's Special Report 27/2021 "EU Support to tourism – Need for a fresh strategic orientation and a better funding approach"; recalls the Court's recommendation to the Commission to set out a consolidated new strategy for the EU tourism ecosystem in cooperation with the Member States in order to develop an effective tourism agenda for 2030 and to apply selection procedures for ERDF-funded tourism investments to support this new strategic orientation; underlines the Commission's responsibility to support the Member States in promoting tourism-related investments, in accordance with the strategic agenda;
31. Calls for examples of relevant investments dedicated to the tourism sector related to the diversification of the tourism offer, extension of the tourism season, and development of high value added tourism products or targeting specific groups, innovative services and digitalisation;
32. Reiterates the Parliament's request for the creation of a new budgetary line for tourism to support this sector, severely hit by the COVID-19 and now suffering from energy crisis, inflation and facing significant challenges connected to impacts of green and digital transitions in the transport and tourism sector; calls on the Commission to develop a new strategy for the tourism sector and a roadmap for smart and sustainable tourism backed up by budgetary means taking also into account that majority of the tourism industry consists of SME;
33. Proposes to grant the Commission and its executive agencies discharge in respect of the implementation of the Union general budget for the financial year 2022 in the fields of Transport and Tourism.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The rapporteur declares under his exclusive responsibility that he did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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|---|--|
| Date adopted | 23.1.2024 |
| Result of final vote | +: 30 -: 3 0: 2 |
| Members present for the final vote | Magdalena Adamowicz, Andris Ameriks, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Ciarán Cuffe, Karima Delli, Carlo Fidanza, Mario Furore, Isabel García Muñoz, Elsi Katainen, Kateřina Konečná, Bogusław Liberadzki, Peter Lundgren, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Tilly Metz, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Caroline Nagtegaal, Philippe Olivier, Rovana Plumb, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Bergur Løkke Rasmussen, Dominique Riquet, Thomas Rudner, Vera Tax, Achille Variati, Petar Vitanov, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Lucia Vuolo |
| Substitutes present for the final vote | Markus Ferber, Vlad Gheorghe, Roman Haider, Pär Holmgren, Ljudmila Novak, Dorien Rookmaker |
| Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote | Viola von Cramon-Taubadel |

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

| 30 | + |
|-----------|---|
| ECR | Carlo Fidanza, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Dorien Rookmaker |
| PPE | Magdalena Adamowicz, Markus Ferber, Elzbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Ljudmila Novak, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Lucia Vuolo |
| Renew | Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Vlad Gheorghe, Elsi Katainen, Caroline Nagtegaal, Bergur Løkke Rasmussen, Dominique Riquet |
| S&D | Andris Ameriks, Isabel García Muñoz, Bogusław Liberadzki, Rovana Plumb, Thomas Rudner, Vera Tax, Achille Variati, Petar Vitanov |
| Verts/ALE | Ciarán Cuffe, Karima Delli, Pär Holmgren, Tilly Metz, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel |

| 3 | - |
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| ECR | Peter Lundgren |
| ID | Philippe Olivier |
| The Left | Kateřina Konečná |

| 2 | 0 |
|----|--------------|
| ID | Roman Haider |
| NI | Mario Furore |

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention