



## 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 – 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 Article 4(2)(g) and Title VI of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. 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, allowing freedom to provide services, and the opening up of transport markets. As transport markets open up, it is vital to create fair competitive conditions both within individual modes of transport and between them. Therefore harmonisation has taken on ever increasing importance, and now covers national laws, regulations and administrative provisions, and the technological, social and tax environment in which transport services are provided.

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. It called for sustainable, low-carbon fuels to account for 40% of use 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 'COP21'). This consideration influenced the action plan proposed by the Commission ([COM\(2019\)0640](#)) entitled 'A [European Green Deal](#)', which goes beyond its headline ambitions (e.g. 'smart and sustainable mobility') to also include overarching climate law objectives, thus turning political commitments on climate policy into legal obligations.



## GENERAL POLICY GUIDELINES

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

On 2 December 1992, the Commission adopted its White Paper on the future development of the common transport policy ([COM\(1992\)0494](#)). This marked a decisive shift towards 'sustainable mobility'. The 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 charging for transport services, which was leading to distortions of competition in intra-modal and intermodal transport.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In the September 2001 White Paper entitled 'European transport policy for 2010: time to decide' ([COM\(2001\)0370](#)), the Commission analysed the challenges of the sector in light of the forthcoming eastern enlargement of the EU. The Commission put forward a package of 60 measures, which were designed to break the link between economic growth and an increase in traffic, to combat the uneven growth in the various modes of transport, to promote an action plan on road safety, to consolidate transport users' rights and to provide 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 Single European Sky Air Traffic Management Research programme (SESAR) 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.

In July 2008, the Commission presented the 'Greening Transport' Package, focusing on a strategy to internalise the external costs of transport, three Commission communications and a proposal for the revision of [Directive 1999/62/EC](#), 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](#)).

Among the 10 objectives included in the 2011 White Paper, the Commission included the establishment of a Single European Transport Area by doing away with all remaining barriers between modes and national systems, easing the process of



integration, and facilitating the emergence of multinational and multimodal operators. 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 up to that point.

#### A. Towards a sustainable mobility model

[Council Directive 92/106/EEC](#) ('Combined Transport Directive') of December 1992 establishes common rules for the combined transport of goods between Member States. It is one of the most crucial EU legal instruments to promote intermodal freight transport and to shift to lower emission transport modes (rail, short sea shipping and inland waterways rather than road transport) with the goal to reduce negative externalities and carbon emissions.

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.

In December 2020, the Commission presented its Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, together with an action plan of 82 initiatives to guide work for the period until 2024 ([COM\(2020\)0789](#)). The strategy sets out a roadmap for putting European transport firmly on the right track for a sustainable and smart future by identifying 10 flagship areas, broken down into milestones. One such milestone is to have at least 30 million zero-emission cars on the roads by 2030.

In July 2021, the Commission put forward a number of legislative proposals and reviews in the field of decarbonising transport in line with the Green Deal objective of reaching climate neutrality by 2050. Some of the proposals include:

- A proposal for the revision of the Emissions Trading System (ETS)<sup>[1]</sup> (including aviation and maritime transport). The final act published on the Official Journal on 16 May 2023 ([Directive \(EU\) 2023/959](#)) includes more ambitious targets for cutting emissions, adds maritime transport to the scheme for the first time, phases out free allowances for aviation and industries from 2026 onwards, and creates a separate ETS for road transport;
- A proposal for the revision of the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR). The final act published on the Official Journal on 22 September 2023 ([Regulation \(EU\) 2023/1804](#)) includes a package of measures for deploying alternative fuels infrastructure in EU Member States, which paves the way for more zero-emission mobility in Europe;
- A proposal for revising the CO<sub>2</sub> emission performance standards, developing stricter emission limits and including the phase-out of cars with an internal combustion engine (ICE) by 2035, paving the way for battery electric vehicles. It was agreed on by Parliament and the Council in March 2023. The final act was signed on 19 April 2023 ([Regulation \(EU\) 2023/851](#)) but still allows cars with an ICE to run on e-fuels after 2035.

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[1]The EU ETS sets a limit on how much greenhouse gas emissions an entity (e.g. the aviation sector) can emit. EU emission allowances are then auctioned or allocated free of charge and made available for trading.



In December 2021, the Commission put forward a second package of proposals to support a transition to cleaner, greener and smarter transport in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal and following the publication of the Commission's sustainable and smart mobility strategy in December 2020. The package includes two major legislative proposals, namely the revision of the TEN-T Guidelines Regulation of 2013 and the revision of the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Directive of 2010.

With the revision of the TEN-T Regulation ([2021/0420\(COD\)](#)), the Commission seeks to better address the challenges the EU is facing in order to modernise the European mobility network, ranging from enhancing interconnectivity of multimodal trans-European transport and regional networks to decarbonisation and digitalisation of transport services and infrastructure. The TEN-T regulation proposal is complemented by the '[action plan to boost long distance passenger and cross-border passenger rail](#)' and a proposal to extend the TEN-T to neighbouring countries, such as Ukraine (through an amended proposal published in July 2022, taking into account the consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine).

Parliament adopted its draft report on the TEN-T proposal in April 2023 with the target to reach an interinstitutional agreement during this legislature before the 2024 elections.

This second package also included a communication on the new Urban Mobility framework ([COM\(2021\)0811](#)), putting the emphasis on public transport and multimodal digital mobility services. Parliament adopted its [own initiative report](#) on the new urban mobility framework on 9 May 2023.

In November 2022, the Commission adopted its proposal on revising the Euro 6 emissions standards for cars, vans, lorries and buses (now [Euro 7 standards](#)). It includes stricter emissions standards for all petrol and diesel cars, vans, lorries and buses. It is currently awaiting a committee decision ([2022/0365\(COD\)](#)). In February 2023, the Commission adopted a revision to [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1242](#) on strengthening CO<sub>2</sub> emissions standards for heavy-duty vehicles ([2023/0042 \(COD\)](#)). Parliament plans to adopt its position in first reading by the end of 2023.

## **B. Automatic driving and intelligent transport systems**

Given the rapid pace with which the technology is developing, the EU is attempting to ensure common rules. With growing automation and connectivity, enabling vehicles to 'speak' to one another, mobility is crossing a new - digital - frontier. These developments, which are being accelerated by progress in artificial intelligence, allow for a whole new level of cooperation among road users, which has the potential to be extremely advantageous for both them and the mobility system as a whole, including making transportation safer, more accessible, and sustainable. In its communication entitled 'On the road to automated mobility: An EU strategy for mobility of the future' ([COM\(2018\)283](#)), the Commission showed it was aware of the challenges associated with automatic driving and stresses the need to better understand its ethical and societal effects (such as on employment and new skills needed) and to tackle emerging ethical issues as soon as possible.

[Directive 2010/40/EU](#) on Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) lays out a framework for the deployment of ITSs. These are advanced applications with the goal of providing



innovative services regarding different transport modes, to better manage transport, to improve information for users and to make transport safer and more coordinated. In December 2021, the Commission adopted a proposal for revising Directive 2010/40/EU with the aim of accelerating and coordinating the deployment of ITSs to improve safety, traffic efficiency and driver comfort ([COM\(2021\)0813](#)). Parliament adopted its position in first reading on 3 October 2023 and the text is now awaiting Council's first reading position.

## ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In addition to providing active support for the liberalisation of transport markets and the 'sustainable mobility' model, Parliament has continued to stress the need to combine these 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 sustainability as the foundation and standard for European transport policy, and the importance of creating an integrated global transport system.

On 25 September 2007 the Commission published a Green Paper entitled 'Towards a new culture for urban mobility' ([COM\(2007\)0551](#)), which Parliament followed up by adopting a [resolution](#) on 9 July 2008 under the same title. Parliament also adopted another [resolution](#) on 23 April 2009 entitled 'an action plan on urban mobility'. The Commission responded to this resolution shortly afterwards with a communication bearing the same title, 'Action Plan on Urban Mobility' ([COM\(2009\)0490](#)), published on 20 September 2009.

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.

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 assessed the main objectives outlined in the 2011 White Paper, and gave partial approval to the progress made in implementing it.

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-fuel vehicles and intelligent transport systems.

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 entitled 'The implementation of the 2011 White Paper on Transport five years after its publication: achievements and challenges'





[\(SWD\(2016\)0226\)](#). Parliament invited the Commission to maintain at least the same level of ambition as in the original goals. Parliament also 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.

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.

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. Ultimately, this led to the revision of the AFIR by the Commission in July 2021 (as mentioned before).

Parliament also welcomed the Commission communication entitled 'On the road to automated mobility' ([COM\(2018\)0283](#)), but in a [resolution](#) of 15 January 2019 Parliament stressed that European actors must join forces to take on the role of world leaders in autonomous transport. However, Parliament also stressed the ethical challenges ahead and called on the Commission to develop, together with other stakeholders, ethical guidelines for artificial intelligence.

In January 2020, Parliament adopted its [resolution](#) on the European Green Deal, thereby following up on the Commission communication and putting forward some guidelines for transport under the heading 'Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility'.

On 13 November 2020, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) entitled 'the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan – How to finance the Green Deal', which also contains input from the Committee on Transport and Tourism.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak and its subsequent impact on transport, on 19 June 2020 Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) entitled 'Transport and tourism in 2020 and beyond' calling for rapid, short- and long-term support for the transport and tourism sectors to ensure their survival and competitiveness. Since March 2020, Parliament has also adopted several related acts under the urgent procedure aimed at combating the immediate negative effects of the pandemic on the transport sector.

In June 2022, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the Commission's proposal for a Social Climate Fund. Parliament voted to introduce a definition of 'mobility poverty', which refers to households with limited access to affordable transport or with high transport costs. Parliament pointed out that the measures and investments supported by the fund should help vulnerable households and transport users.

In February 2023, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on developing an EU cycling strategy. It suggests promoting cycling habits and a green transition in the EU by having more dedicated cycling lanes, bicycle parking spaces and a reduction of VAT on the supply, repair and renting of bikes and e-bikes.

Parliament adopted its [own initiative report](#) on the new urban mobility framework on 9 May 2023.



Davide Pernice  
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