



TRANS-EUROPEAN NETWORKS – GUIDELINES

The trans-European networks (TENs) in transport, energy and telecommunications are developed to connect the regions of the EU and to contribute to the growth of the internal market and employment. They strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion. The trans-European transport network (TEN-T) has evolved over time, including a fundamental reform in 2013 and a major revision proposed in 2021. The energy infrastructure (TEN-E) guidelines were adapted to the European Green Deal in 2022.

LEGAL BASIS

Articles 170-172 and 194(1)(d) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (the latter for energy).

[Regulation \(EU\) No 1315/2013](#) of 11 December 2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network.

[Regulation \(EU\) 2022/869](#) of 30 May 2022 on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure.

OBJECTIVES

The Maastricht Treaty gave the EU the task of establishing and developing TENs in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, in order to help develop the internal market, reinforce economic and social cohesion, link islands, landlocked and peripheral regions with the central regions of the EU, and bring EU territory within closer reach of neighbouring states.

RESULTS

A. Initial guidelines and ideas

In its 1993 White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, the Commission emphasised the fundamental importance of the TENs to the internal market, and in particular to job creation, not only through the actual construction of infrastructure, but also thanks to their subsequent role in economic development. The first priority projects (PPs) were approved in 1994.



B. Sectoral policy developments and legislative measures

1. Transport

a. 1996 TEN-T guidelines

[Decision No 1692/96/EC](#) of 23 July 1996 on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network set out the general parameters for the overall network. It established the characteristics of the specific network for each mode of transport and identified eligible projects of common interest (PCIs) as well as PPs. Emphasis was placed on environmentally friendly modes of transport, in particular rail projects. Initially, it incorporated the 14 PCIs adopted by the Essen European Council. [Decision No 1346/2001/EC](#) of 22 May 2001 amending the TEN-T guidelines as regards seaports, inland ports and intermodal terminals completed a Community ‘transport development plan’ for all modes of transport.

b. 2004 revision of the TEN-T guidelines

The 2004 and 2007 enlargements, coupled with serious delays and financing problems, led to a thorough revision of the TEN-T guidelines. The number of PPs listed was increased to 30, all of them being required to comply with EU environmental legislation. A new concept of ‘Motorways of the Sea’ (MoS) was introduced with a view to making certain sea routes more efficient and integrating short sea shipping with rail transport.

‘European coordinators’ for particularly important projects were appointed in 2005 to act as mediators in contact with national decision-making authorities, transport operators and users, and representatives of civil society.

c. 2013 revision: integrated network, dual-layer structure (core/comprehensive) and TEN-T corridors

While the earlier TEN-T policy mainly supported the implementation of separate transport priority projects in the EU Member States, the 2013 revision introduced a more systematic EU-wide network approach with a common set of rules for the network’s construction and financing. The [network](#) is set up in two layers: the core network of main routes (to be completed by 2030) and the comprehensive network of connections feeding into the core network (to be finished by 2050). The core network consists of nine interconnected multimodal transport corridors connecting several countries. Two ‘horizontal priorities’ focus on the development of maritime connections (MoS) and the installation of a common European rail traffic management system ([ERTMS](#)).

[Regulation \(EU\) No 1315/2013](#) also incorporated the earlier [rail freight corridors](#) into the TEN-T, set mandatory technical specifications for infrastructure development in each transport mode and established priority areas for action. The development of the network is focused on missing links, mainly in cross-border sections, on infrastructure interoperability, on improving multimodal connections and on reducing levels of greenhouse gas emissions from transport. Through subsequent [delegated Commission acts](#), the network also reflects developments in cooperation with non-EU countries, in particular Switzerland, Norway, Turkey and the Western Balkan countries. The TEN-T maritime dimension was adapted following British withdrawal from the EU.



The responsibility for planning, building and maintaining transport infrastructure continues to lie with the Member States, while spatial planning and permit issuing is often handled by regional authorities. ‘European coordinators’ assigned by the Commission act as mediators in contact with national decision-making authorities, transport operators and users, and representatives of civil society in order to facilitate the development of the network’s corridors and horizontal priorities.

To support the implementation of the TEN-T, the EU complements the national funding of TEN-T projects through the Connecting Europe Facility as a dedicated funding programme, as well as through the European structural and investment funds, the [InvestEU](#) programme and the European Investment Bank ([EIB](#)). In 2021, several Member States also decided to use part of their EU [Recovery and Resilience funding](#) to advance [TEN-T rail projects](#).

The funding activities under the Connecting Europe Facility for TEN-T projects are centrally managed through the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (for more information on TENs financing, see [3.5.2](#)).

d. 2021 TEN-T revision

On 14 December 2021, the Commission adopted the revision of the TEN-T guidelines. The [proposed regulation](#) envisages changes compared with the 2013 Regulation as regards the network’s alignment, as well as the requirements on its infrastructure and governance. It thereby also aims to support the decarbonisation of transport in line with the target of a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport by 2050, as put forward in the European Green Deal. In particular, the high-quality network has to be gradually completed in three phases: 2030 for the core network, 2040 for the (newly introduced) extended core network and 2050 for the comprehensive network. The most important axes of the core and extended core network representing the highest EU added value are regrouped into nine European Transport Corridors. The European transport corridors integrate the former core network corridors and rail freight corridors. Other new elements comprise, in particular, higher train speeds and more efficient cross-border operations across the core and extended core networks for passengers and freight; the deployment, across the TEN-T network, of the charging and refuelling infrastructure needed for alternative transport fuels in line with the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation; more transshipment hubs and multimodal passenger terminals in cities to facilitate multimodality; and connecting large airports to rail, where possible, high-speed rail.

The TEN-T regulation proposal is complemented by the ‘[Action plan to boost long-distance passenger and cross-border passenger rail](#)’ of 14 December 2021, which has the aim of increasing high-speed rail capacity and new European Investment Bank support for investing in rail, with the overall objective of achieving the net-zero target in the European Green Deal.

On 27 July 2022, the Commission presented an [amended proposal](#) to reflect the modified geopolitical context, including an extension of four European transport corridors to Ukraine and Moldova. The Parliament mandate for negotiations with the Council was adopted in April 2023.



On 14 April 2023, the Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted its report on the revision of the TEN-T guidelines. The report constitutes Parliament's mandate for the interinstitutional negotiations with the Council that started in April 2023.

On 16 May 2023, the Commission signed high-level [agreements](#) with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, which adapt the TEN-T by linking it to the Western Balkans.

2. Energy

a. 1996 guidelines

At the 1994 Essen summit, several energy network projects were awarded priority status. [Decision No 1254/96/EC](#) of 1996 laid down a series of guidelines for trans-European energy networks (TEN-E) to help identify eligible PCIs and create a framework conducive to their implementation, coupled with sectoral objectives for electricity.

b. Current guidelines

[Regulation \(EU\) No 347/2013](#) laid down EU guidelines for the development and interoperability of TEN-E infrastructure, repealing the previous ones. It determined the conditions for eligibility of PCIs for EU financial assistance under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). PCIs are infrastructure projects necessary to implement the EU energy policy priorities, including improved interconnection between national markets, greater competitiveness, security of supply and promotion of renewable energy sources.

As energy infrastructure is a central enabler for the energy transition, a review of the TEN-E Regulation was required following the Commission's communications on [the European Green Deal](#) and a [Clean Planet for all](#). In 2020, the Commission proposed a revision of the 2013 TEN-E Regulation to better support the modernisation of Europe's cross-border energy infrastructure and achieve the objectives of the Green Deal. The [revised TEN-E Regulation](#) ((EU) (2022/869) contributes to achieving the EU's 2030 targets for energy and climate and its climate neutrality objective by 2050. It helps ensure interconnections, energy security, market and system integration and competition that benefits all Member States, as well as affordability of energy prices. The guidelines mostly end EU support for new natural gas and oil projects and introduce mandatory sustainability criteria for all PCI projects. The 11 priority corridors cover electricity, offshore grids for renewable energy and hydrogen infrastructure, while the three priority thematic areas focus on smart electricity grids deployment, smart gas grids, and a cross-border (captured) carbon dioxide network. The first PCI list adopted under the new rules is expected in autumn 2023.

3. Telecommunications

[Decision No 2717/95/EC](#) of 1995 established guidelines for the development of the EURO-ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) as a TEN. It identified objectives, priorities and PCIs for the development of a range of services, based on the EURO-ISDN, with a view to a future EU broadband communications network.



[Decision No 1336/97/EC](#) of 1997 laid down guidelines for the trans-European telecommunications networks (TEN-Telecom). The priorities adopted included applications contributing to economic and social cohesion and the development of basic networks, particularly satellite networks. These guidelines were modified slightly by [Decision No 1376/2002/EC](#) in 2002.

The guidelines identified PCIs and specified procedures and criteria for their selection. The Community programme eTEN, which was a key instrument of the action plan known as 'eEUROPE 2005: An information society for all', also built on the EURO-ISDN programme. Completed in 2006, it sought to support the trans-European deployment of services based on telecommunications networks. EU investment is currently focused on modernising existing networks.

In 2015, as part of its [digital single market strategy](#), the Commission published several proposals to reform the EU telecommunications regulatory framework. In 2016, the Commission published proposals including a directive setting out a European electronic communications code (EECC). EECC [Directive \(EU\) 2018/1972](#), which entered into force in 2018, modernised the existing EU telecommunications rules ([2.1.8](#)).

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament has strongly supported the TEN policies, and has regularly drawn attention to delays in the implementation of PPs, called for firm timetables, and urged the Member States to increase the budgetary resources available, particularly for the TEN-T network. It has ensured that priority is given to promoting projects with clear 'European added value', which have positive and long-term effects on the environment and employment and remove bottlenecks, particularly in rail and combined transport.

Over the past 15 years, Parliament has assisted in the revision of overlapping legislation on the TEN-T. Together with the Council, it adopted [Regulation \(EU\) No 1315/2013](#) on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network.

In 2013, Parliament approved the new TEN-T guidelines on the basis of precise targets and increased EU financing, and set out a clear vision for the establishment of the core and comprehensive transport networks, with target dates of 2030 and 2050 respectively. Parliament insisted, inter alia, that the selection of projects be based on the idea of EU added value (resulting from policy choices and/or financial intervention leading to significant and measurable improvement in transport connections and transport flows). After the TEN-T Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013) entered into force at the end of 2013, Parliament's support for the development of the TEN-T continued. In its 2015 [resolution](#) on the implementation of the 2011 White Paper on Transport: taking stock and the way forward towards sustainable mobility, Parliament underlined the importance of transport for the economy and for the mobility of people in the EU. In Parliament's view, the completion of the TEN-T is a precondition for a sustainable and efficient EU transport system, which must be boosted by dedicated EU co-funding, in particular under the CEF.

In 2018, the Commission presented a proposal for a regulation on streamlining measures for advancing the realisation of the trans-European transport network in order to address the issue of persistent delays in the implementation of PCIs. Negotiations



between Parliament and the Council resulted in a compromise text and the [directive](#) was published on 20 July 2021.

On 20 January 2021, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the revision of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) guidelines. The resolution highlights the importance of a future-proof TEN-T network in ensuring the proper functioning of the EU's single market and the further realisation of the Single European Transport Area. It also highlights the importance of the EU's global competitiveness in the coming decades and supports the green and digital transition towards smart, sustainable, efficient and safe mobility. The resolution reiterates Parliament's calls for sufficient investment in TEN-T infrastructure, in particular in order to complete the TEN-T core network by 2030. It stresses that all relevant EU funds (CEF, InvestEU, European structural and investment funds, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, Horizon Europe, etc.) and EIB lending should be tailored to the specific needs of the transport sector and that Member States should commit to sufficient funding.

In its 2020 [resolution](#) on the revision of the guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure, Parliament called for a revision that takes account of the EU's energy and climate targets for 2030, its long-term decarbonisation commitment and the 'energy efficiency first' principle. It highlighted the need to ensure that spending and the selection of PCIs are in line with the commitments made under the Paris Agreement.

In its [legislative resolution](#) of 5 April 2022 on the revised regulation on trans-European energy infrastructure, Parliament called for the stronger involvement of stakeholders in cross-border infrastructure planning and the PCI selection process, and a more diverse representation of different sectors in the consultations. Parliament also pushed for boosting offshore renewable energy projects and for making it easier to integrate them into the EU networks, with the aim of achieving the EU's net-zero objective.

Parliament also underlined, in its [resolution](#) of 5 October 2022 on the EU's response to the increase in energy prices in Europe, that a truly resilient European energy network, including the construction of new interconnectors, would contribute to alleviating the price pressure on businesses and consumers in the short term, and to establishing energy independence and resilience in the long term. It recognised that key infrastructure needs to remain under EU control, thereby fostering open strategic autonomy, and called on the Commission and the Member States to accelerate key infrastructure projects based on renewable energy and clean hydrogen by facilitating the permitting process, while paying due regard to public participation and environmental impact assessment procedures.

In its [recommendation](#) of 23 November 2022 on the EU strategy for enlargement, Parliament recommended strengthening partnerships between candidate countries and the EU through principal infrastructure projects within the TEN-E and TEN-T networks. Parliament supports taking immediate steps to achieve the long-term and sustainable connection of candidate countries to the European energy transmission network and include them in the EU's energy policy strategies, with a focus on those which are heavily dependent on Russian gas and severely impacted due to their favourable position towards the EU.



For more information on these topics, please see the websites of the [Committee on Transport and Tourism](#) and of the [Committee on Industry, Research and Energy](#).

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