Large transport infrastructure projects in the EU

2022/2021(INI) - 13/06/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 538 votes to 23, with 68 abstentions, a resolution on large transport infrastructure projects in the EU - implementation of projects and monitoring and control of EU funds.

Major transport projects in the EU

Members pointed out that large infrastructure projects play a **crucial role** in implementing TEN-T policy and are of instrumental importance in removing bottlenecks and eliminating missing links, particularly on cross-border sections. Effective monitoring, control and financial management of such projects are key to their successful implementation.

Adequate connectivity within and between European regions is crucial, not least because of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the urgent need to develop alternative logistics routes using different modes of transport. Members therefore stressed that extending the European transport network corridors to non-EU neighbouring partner countries (such as Ukraine, Moldova, Northern Macedonia, Albania, etc.) would considerably improve the seamless functioning of the TEN-T.

EU funding and implementation

The resolution pointed out 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. Members called for **synergies between cohesion funds and the recovery and resilience facility** in order to increase the impact of investments on the ground and avoid double funding.

Identified policy shortcomings and challenges

Parliament called for the **role of European coordinators to be strengthened** in order to facilitate the deployment of infrastructure projects along TEN-T corridors and to ensure cooperation and successful implementation of cross-border projects. It stressed that projects under Member States' national plans should go hand in hand with projects aligned with the Union's transport objectives. Member States should prioritise the **completion of the entire TEN-T core network by 2030** over the completion of the extended and comprehensive networks.

The resolution stressed that the Commission should play a greater role in the oversight of project planning and implementation along the transport network corridors. It is suggested that there should be greater coherence between national transport plans and EU investments and priorities, and that EU funding should be conditional on compliance with EU priorities for the deployment of transport infrastructure.

Members regretted that large infrastructure projects co-financed by the EU are, on average, experiencing longer delays than comparable transport projects worldwide. They urged Member States to implement the Smart TEN-T Directive to enable **simplified and harmonised permitting procedures and prevent delays in projects**.

Parliament drew 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. It called for the **Connecting Europe Facility** to be increased to meet the additional costs stemming from inflation.

Main priorities and recommendations

In particular, the resolution stated that:

- a **systematic, risk-based monitoring** system for large transport projects would help to better address the significant delays in large transport infrastructure projects in the Union and contribute to further improving the management of cost overruns;

- a **two-stage approach**, whereby project promoters would only be invited to submit a full project file once their expression of interest has been approved, could be considered for the next programming period;

- the use of a **single integrated and interoperable information and monitoring system** should be made compulsory, given that infrastructure projects are exposed to the risk of irregularities, particularly corruption;

- the **results** of major transport projects should be given greater visibility, as they play an important role in achieving long-term socio-economic and environmental benefits;

- the Commission should further strengthen ex-post evaluation indicators, where possible, by introducing criteria such as road safety; for each major transport infrastructure project, a socio-economic cost-benefit analysis as well as an environmental impact assessment should be carried out;

- **close alignment** between the Union's strategic priorities and those of the Member States would be desirable; the Commission should exercise greater control over the planning and implementation of projects along transport network corridors;

- there would be advantages in having a **designated authority** to streamline administrative procedures at national level;

- in order to avoid long waiting times at the Union's internal borders, an **EU-wide standard of one minute** on average should be set for the processing and control of EU-registered heavy-duty vehicles at the EU’s borders in order to help facilitate optimum use of transport infrastructure and networks;

- the **European cross-border mechanism** should be adopted rapidly, since it would improve the effectiveness of EU investment in cross-border transport infrastructure.