

FIEC Input to Evaluation Study on the 2011 Transport White Paper

Roads & Multimodality

Multimodality is key to achieve common goals and there is still a huge potential when it comes to the improvement of rail or waterway infrastructure as necessary infrastructure is still missing.

However, for a transport strategy (White Paper 2011), the role of roads is neglected. It is important to underline the value of roads in the sense that high quality roads can substantially contribute to safe, competitive, intelligent and sustainable transport infrastructure. The increasing negative image of cars must not be detrimental to roads which are neutral in terms of emissions and a part of the answer to many challenges.

High quality roads (and bridges and tunnels) can substantially contribute to common goals. These infrastructures are ageing, and their quality is constantly decreasing. A minimum quality and performance of road infrastructure must figure among the targets. A minimum performance level is also important with regard to the upgrade and digitalisation of road infrastructure.

Maintenance/adaptation

The maintenance of infrastructure (including tunnels and bridges) must be put in the center of transport policy. Transport infrastructures are ageing which might entail considerable negative socio-economic and environmental consequences. It is essential for less developed Member States but also for the most developed ones. In France, for instance, bridges are closed on a daily basis, due to the lack of maintenance.

Infrastructure development and maintenance are Member States' competences, however providing better regulation and funding, especially on the TEN-T, the EU can have a positive impact.

High quality of roads through regular maintenance can have important positive impacts in terms of:

- Increasing road safety
- Reducing congestion
- Reducing of environmental costs (CO2 emissions, noise, pollution)
- Boosting socio-economic development [(see impacts of bridge closures for example) + limited economic growth in recent years and perspectives of contracted growth increase the necessity of well- developed transport infrastructure to improve mobility in the internal market]
- Increasing transport quality by enhancing connectivity and accessibility (mobility as a service requires reliable infrastructure)

External costs to society could even increase in the coming years when considering the ageing of infrastructures mainly built in the 1950s (see collapse of bridges or increased congestion e.g.) and a forecasted increase in traffic.

However, the White Paper had no impact on infrastructure maintenance, nor provided any measure to improve it. A revision of the White Paper will have to stress much more the concepts of infrastructure maintenance and development.

March 2020

The performance of the EU transport system should be measured against the quality and safety of its infrastructure.

For an efficient maintenance and longevity of infrastructure we see it as beneficial to include a life cycle approach to infrastructure projects.

New construction/accessibility/TEN-T

Also, new road infrastructure is still relevant.

Peripheral areas in Europe and Eastern European countries in general experienced most of the improvements in terms of accessibility. In these areas, more infrastructure has been built, closing existing gaps. Nevertheless, still major connection shortcomings exist. Accessibility and provision of services is still restricted in some areas because of the lack of basic infrastructure. The existence of more infrastructure improves the quality of the service itself. Mobility as a service requires new infrastructures.

The EU provided funding opportunities for infrastructure development in the framework of the TEN-T network. The TEN-T network is still far from being completed.

The completion of the TEN-T network is key for the functioning of the internal market. By connecting regions, it enhances the mobility of people and goods which is crucial for the competitiveness of the European economy. At the same time, the TEN-T infrastructure can lead by example in terms of sustainability, quality and safety. To be effective, adequate funding and the rapid execution of projects is necessary. Limited administrative capacities, lengthy administrative procedures and insufficient financial means inhibit the completion of TEN-T.

Cities/Urban Mobility

Cities are still far away from being CO₂ neutral. Deteriorating quality of infrastructure and increasing congestion make situations even worse. Improving urban infrastructures bears the potential of solving challenges linked to urban mobility such as congestions and pollution. For instance, in major urban areas, new road infrastructure (tunnels e.g.) bears the potential of reducing congestion and the associated costs.

Digitisation

Digitisation had marginal positive impacts so far on the objectives of the White Paper. It will be critical in the future to adapt to new forms of mobility, monitor the health of infrastructure (predictive maintenance), connect vehicles to infrastructure and pave the way for autonomous driving.

The uptake of such technologies should be promoted. Here as well, TEN-T could lead as example.

In the future, a better view on infrastructure in terms of data will be needed. Currently, there is no (comparable) data available regarding the quality of infrastructure at European level. Collection of such data is essential to make data driven decisions.

Financing & Road Pricing

It must be made clear that these targets require significant investments. The targets are extremely ambitious and need to be backed up by the adequate financial means which is not the case. For instance, CEF is under-financed. In general, the final form of the initiatives does not correspond to the level ambition of the White Paper. Expenditures for infrastructure are on decline since the economic crisis.

Importance of coordination between funding instruments.

Financial instruments are not yet well coordinated at the European level in terms of results.

Road pricing still lacks a real EU approach and does not incorporate the earmarking principle. Road charging misses its target when the earmarking principle is not applied. Member States are reluctant to adopt this principle in legislation. Road pricing when connected to the earmarking principle can be of vital importance when it comes to the continuous financing of infrastructure by being separated from political preferences that govern national budgets.

Road safety

Road safety is in one way or another linked to the quality of infrastructure which is still of poor quality in several Member States. Road casualties have not been halved which is also due to the bad quality of infrastructure in some parts of the EU. Some progresses in terms of reducing the number of road casualties since the White Paper. Main factors driving this trend were the improved safety of cars and a more safety-aware driving behaviour. Infrastructure can be a main contributor to road safety, if the quality is kept high. The poor quality of infrastructure in Europe surely did not help driving down the number of casualties.

Safety is also an issue that is gaining slightly more importance, in particular after the collapse of the Morandi bridge in Genoa. However, there is still not sufficient awareness. The EC did not focus on promoting the improvement of existing infrastructure in order to increase their safety, but rather on new infrastructure projects. An example is the Road Infrastructure Management Directive, which does not include bridges nor structural infrastructure safety.