

On the integration of the European railway network

Effective flow of goods and people is an important part of European integration. Therefore, the need for a transition to a fossil free transportation system within an effective and integrated railway network has never been greater.

The ongoing plans in several Member States to maintain, reactivate, upgrade and construct conventional and high-speed tracks is a good start, but needs to be boosted.

Investments in infrastructure for cross-border links – such as high-speed railway, EuroCity and Euronight are essential in order to create a robust and integrated railway network and seriously challenge aviation as means of transport for both short and medium distances. All too often, rail travel and transport are handled as national issues, leaving aviation and road transport as the most likely choices for cross-border transportation.

The European level is much needed to fund important cross-border links and projects that individual Member States have trouble funding. In this context, it is important that allocated funds are additional and not a substitute for national budgets or at the expense of financial support for regional rail. The EU has also to develop stronger tools for shifting the goods from road to the railway - and to formulate concrete and binding goals.

Developing faster trains is a positive step, however this development should not be done to the detriment of the preservation of regional, regular - fixed prices - train lines, affecting especially the mobility of people with lower incomes, or living in less urban areas. Mobility for the few is not an ideal that we support, therefore, the train transportation systems should take the aspects of accessibility, and right to mobility for all as a core principle, and make sure that it applies through funding schemes, planning and implementation.

Another challenge for the European railway network is to make it easy to book journeys by train. The simplicity of flight bookings must be transposed to rail so that the consumer can just as easily buy a train ticket for a longer journey as a flight.

The transportation sector stands for about one fourth of the carbon emissions within the European Union, a share most likely to increase unless necessary

measures are taken. Today, the growth in the transport sector more than outweighs the climate gains made in other sectors. We believe it is possible to change this development through a number of actions:

1. It must be easy to choose the train and other green means of transport, as much for individual travellers, as for the transportation of goods.
2. The EU must create platforms and support technical solutions to increase the efficiency of door-to-door intermodal networks. Ticket purchases is one example. Another useful option is to integrate the time schedule of trains, aviation and buses, just like aviation timetables are integrated in accordance with international agreements to support inter-modality.
3. Obstacles related to borders, such as cross-border planning of infrastructure, technical standards and compatibility, finance models, ticket purchases etc. need to be overcome and the issues solved. The EU should set standards to harmonise the different signalling systems and the licences of the trains within Europe to make it easier and cheaper to set up boarder-crossing train lines. The EU system has to be used as a tool that contributes to innovative solutions to a far greater extent.
4. Train and other green means of transport must no longer be discriminated against as to infrastructure charges, taxes, investments and regulation.
5. The EU must work strategically to create better conditions for trains and night trains as an alternative to aviation. European funds should therefore be available for international train lines and night trains.
6. Shifting goods transportation from road to rail will make a substantial difference to the carbon footprint of the transport sector. Therefore, existing EU legislation must be revised and improved to create better conditions for this necessary transition.
7. Since the aims of the Paris agreements have not yet been targeting air and maritime transport, the European Union must enforce a regulation in order to make the Paris agreement also relevant in these fields. This could be done in the first place by forbidding subsidizing policies and low cost tickets which create a discrimination between air transport, maritime transport and railway transport.
8. Introduce a moratorium on investments from EU instruments such as TEN-

T¹, CEF², EIB³ and the EFSI⁴ on all transportation infrastructure that increase the European dependency on oil. Investments should aim at integrating the European infrastructure system mainly through investing in cross-border railway connections and sustainable maritime transportation. The focus must be put on regional cross-border rail sections that have been abandoned or dismantled (see <http://www.missing-rail-links.eu>). Further, agreed investments on highways and airports, etc. ought to be reconsidered.

9. In order to optimize TEN-T projects, a debate should be opened on the role of a European Transport Organizing Authority.
10. Money in the TEN-T projects should only be used for fossil free infrastructure to a much greater extent. It is necessary to change the competitive situation in favour of railways by altering the priority of transport infrastructure investment from road to railway construction. On the contrary, the EU has a responsibility to promote a pan-European fossil free transportation network. Public money should be spent not just where the return of investments will be granted from a financial point of view, but the return of investing in the environment must also be taken into account. Thus, it is necessary that investments prioritise those who contribute to minimising external costs, instead of generating them.
9. In the upcoming multi-financial framework, more money will have to be allocated to the completion of the railway in TEN-T.
10. The Commission needs additional tools to follow up the national plan of each Member State in order to ensure that enough is done to complete the

¹ TEN-T = Trans-European Transport Network

The TEN-T policy supports the completion of Priority Projects, representing high European added value, as well as projects of common interest and important traffic management systems. Multi-annual and annual work programmes set the specific objectives and priorities to be met.

² CEF = Connecting Europe Facility

The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) should accelerate investment in the field of trans-European networks and leverage funding from both the public and the private sectors. The CEF should enable synergies between the transport, telecommunications and energy sectors to be harnessed to the full.

³ EIB = European Investment Bank

The EIB is the European Union's bank whose shareholders are the member states of the EU. It works closely with other EU institutions to implement EU policy and is the world's largest international public lending institution.

⁴ EFSI = European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)

The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) is an initiative launched jointly by the EIB Group and the European Commission to help overcome the current investment gap in the EU by mobilising private financing for strategic investments in key areas such as infrastructure, education, research and innovation, as well as risk finance for small businesses.

core and comprehensive railway network of the TEN-T. European funds that pay for studies and infrastructure should be seen as added money on top of the national money spent on infrastructure, not financial resources in order to replace national investments in infrastructure.