Towards a new Connecting Europe Facility for Transport[1]

With the revised Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Regulation in effect since July 2024, the first objectives must be realised in 2030. The network forms the backbone of the European economy and is crucial to the competitiveness of the European single market as set out in Mario Draghi's report.[2] It is important to ensure a seamless, interoperable, resilient, future-proof and safe network that complies with the new TEN-T requirements to allow for reliable inter-European transport opportunities. In order to realise these goals, the Netherlands considers the continuation of the goals of the *Connecting Europe Facility for Transport* within the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework essential. Investments within CEF-T should focus on upgrading infrastructure to support **military mobility**, create **future-proof and climate-resilient networks**, and promote **modernisation and digitalisation**. Following these priorities, investments in at least the upcoming CEF-period should focus on new infrastructure in order to comply with the TEN-T requirements. Additionally, it should also allow for the maintenance of existing infrastructure and essential hubs to ensure the network corresponds to the economic principles as set out in the Draghi report end to become and remain militarily viable. Ultimately, this enhances **connectivity and** ensures well-functioning cross-border transport networks, that contribute to the competitiveness of the European economy.

Promoting connectivity and cross-border connections

A major objective of the TEN-T Regulation is to ensure connectivity through cross-border transport, multimodality and interoperability between the different transport modes. This is also essential for the economic prosperity of the EU. This means that CEF-T funding has to contribute to well-functioning and seamless TEN-T corridors and cross border connections. The Netherlands suggests to rethink the existing cross-border approach for receiving CEF-T funding, and consider it from a connectivity perspective. The impact on the functioning of the entire network is essential, regardless of the geographical location. On the one hand this entails efforts to better connect cities and high-speed stations on both sides of borders between member states. On the other hand, this also entails attention for inland projects. For example, sea, inland waterway and airports are geographically located within a territory's borders, but have a crucial role in the functioning of the corridor and for the entire economy of the Union. Furthermore, national railway projects, such as improving railway capacity or the smoother incorporation of 740 metres and international trains on the national tracks have comparable cross-border functions. Enabling these types of projects leads to a further integrated TEN-T corridor network, in which the military corridors should also be incorporated.

Military mobility

As a consequence of geopolitical developments, including the Russian aggression against Ukraine on the European continent, preparedness has become a priority in EU policymaking. As infrastructure plays a key role in ensuring energy supplies and safeguard the European economy, the well-functioning of the TEN-T network should remain guaranteed. Infrastructure plays a crucial role in this new reality, as it should facilitate the smooth movement of military personnel and

[1] This non-paper focusses on the general direction of a new CEF-T and limits itself to thematic aspects which should find a way into the new CEF regulation. This non-paper does not comment on the functioning or practical organisation of a new CEF. The Netherlands will further elaborate on the latter and present its position on this in due time.
[2] The future of European competitiveness, Mario Draghi, September 2024.

equipment. In this context, the current state of numerous bridges, tunnels, roads, tracks and waterways on European military corridors is a concern. They are reaching their technical end of life and require strengthening, adjustments and/or other maintenance to meet the EU military requirements. To make this more concrete, for instance railway bridges along the military corridors need strengthening in order to be able to carry the weight of heavy military equipment. Also, specific conditions for the military corridors have to be realised, such as the proper distance between signs and tracks. As these projects are expensive, complex, yet crucial and urgent, the Netherlands would welcome CEF-T funding to be made available for investments in upgrading or maintaining such infrastructure, particularly on the military corridors.

Future-proof climate-resilient networks

Increasing severe weather conditions pose serious challenges to our networks. Both on the adaptation and mitigation side serious progress needs to be made. With regards to adaptation and resilience measures, innovative solutions contributing to smart and sustainable planning and maintenance of new and existing infrastructure are essential. According to the Netherlands finds that continued attention should be paid to potential risks like heatwaves, drought, storms, floods, and wildfires, when applying for CEF-T funding. The European Commission's study on climate adaptive needs to realise the TEN-T network can serve as a guidance document.[3]

In terms of mitigation, the Netherlands remains committed to decarbonising the transport sector. The *Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation* (AFIR) forms a crucial legislative framework and creates conditions for the roll-out of charging infrastructure across the Union. To stimulate the implementation of AFIR, the *Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Facility* (AFIF) provides financial support, enabling the development of sufficient charging infrastructure on the TEN-T network. The AFIR roll-out has an immense impact on the electricity grid, meaning that an integral approach must be taken to tackle net congestion. Synergetic projects, that reduce transport emissions while relieving grid congestion, including temporary solutions like battery packs, should be stimulated. Therefore, the Netherlands proposes to continue the funding of alternative fuels infrastructure, including related investments, and sees additional value in synergetic funding possibilities.

Modernisation and digitalisation

With transport volumes rising across all modes, optimising the efficiency of the existing TEN-T network is essential. This includes both further implementation of systems such as European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), and Single European Sky Air Traffic Management (SESAR), as well as efficiency-enhancing measures such as the promotion of 740 metres trains or further development of inland waterway connections. The Netherlands advocates for retaining the possibility to receive CEF-T funding for integrating ERTMS systems in trains, as well as other digital infrastructure, such as ITS and River Information Services (RIS), to maximise efficiency and capacity of existing infrastructure.

Through the inclusion of urban nodes, TEN-T now recognises its urban dimension. It is vital to give continued support to integrate those systems and nodes into the network. When doing so, the

[3] Support study on the climate adaptation and cross-border investment needs to realise the TEN-T network, European Commission, July 2024.

Netherlands sees added value in combining the strengths of the various modes of transport. This includes active modes of transport, like biking and walking, as part of larger projects.

Final remarks

With varying states of compliance with the TEN-T networks across the Union, connectivity can serve as a means to benefit all EU Member States within the context of the TEN-T Regulation. CEF-T funding for investments in improving and maintaining military mobility, including upgrading the network, ensuring future-proof climate-resilient networks, and integrating modern and digital systems, are crucial to meet the objectives of the TEN-T Regulation and for the network to comply with the Draghi principles.

With this paper, the Netherlands does not pre-empt the yet to be determined position on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). It does not address the governance surrounding the deployment of future funds in Europe and the Netherlands. The overarching Dutch MFF position is leading in the event of conflicting formulations.