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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

of the

Regulation (EU) N° 1315/2013 on Union Guidelines for the development of a trans-European transport network

{SWD(2021) 117 final}

1. Introduction: Key elements of TEN-T policy

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union stipulates the establishment and development of trans-European networks in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructures. Trans-European networks shall enable citizens of the Union, economic operators and regional communities to derive full benefit from an area without internal frontiers. They shall also take account of the need to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union and to promote its overall harmonious development.

To achieve these objectives, the Union established sectorial ‘guidelines’ for the establishment of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) which aim to develop a European multimodal and interoperable transport network of roads, rail, inland waterways and maritime routes which is linked to urban nodes, ports, airports and other terminals. The network shall enable smooth global transport flows of both freight and passengers, in particular by improving cross-border connections and removing bottlenecks and missing links. It shall also enhance accessibility and connectivity of all regions, including remote, outermost, insular, peripheral and mountainous regions as well as sparsely populated areas.

Regulation (EU) 1315/2013 on Union Guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, which is currently in force, has been the result of the first substantial revision of the TEN-T Guidelines since 1996. It introduced the following key elements and features:

- The introduction of a *Europe-wide dual layer network approach* which is based on a coherent EU-wide planning methodology acknowledged by Member States and which is composed of a ‘comprehensive’ transport network (i.e. the ground layer to ensure accessibility of all European regions) and a ‘core’ network (i.e. the part of the comprehensive network of highest strategic importance and of highest implementation priority).
- The introduction of *ambitious and binding infrastructure standards and requirements* for all transport modes to achieve interoperability and quality of the network, with most ambitious standards established for the core network featuring high capacity and high quality standards.
- The introduction of *common completion deadlines* for the core (2030) and the comprehensive network (2050), accompanied by a strong new implementation instrument for the core network, i.e. the core network corridors. This instrument of core network corridors aims to facilitate the coherent and timely implementation of ‘corridors’ and is led by European Coordinators.
- Increased *focus on network nodes*, both transport nodes and urban nodes as important interfaces to enable seamless clean multi-modal transport, including sustainable and safe first and last mile connections in cities.

The TEN-T Regulation provides thus all relevant actors (i.e. Member States, regions, cities, transport industry, infrastructure managers of all transport modes, users etc.) with a common policy framework, binding standards and requirements as well as fixed deadlines for completion of the network. It works towards the gradual completion of the common and consistent European transport infrastructure network. As such, it adds a European perspective to national infrastructure planning and addresses needs and benefits beyond single national approaches, whilst the main responsibility for the implementation of projects contributing to

the achievement of the TEN-T objectives, standards and requirements has to be however assumed by the Member States concerned and, as appropriate, other public and private actors.

It shall also be noted that TEN-T policy depends on complementary policies – even more – it is in combination and synergy with other policy areas a pillar of EU transport policy. As the EU transport infrastructure policy, TEN-T policy is not a purpose in itself. The standards and requirements set in the TEN-T Regulation are directly connected with the relevant objectives and needs in other transport sectors/fields and thus with other more sector-specific legislations (e.g. per transport mode). In other words, TEN-T performance is depending on coordinated efforts in TEN-T and related policy fields.

2. Purpose and scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation is carried out almost at mid-term on the way between the last substantial revision of the Regulation in 2013 and the first key milestone of TEN-T policy – the completion of the core network in 2030. It assesses to what extent the implementation efforts so far have led to the expected results and benefits and if implementation is on the right track towards the 2030 and 2050 milestones. In addition, it aims to assess whether its objectives and related standards and requirements are still relevant and coherent in view of the increased ambitions of the EU's environmental and climate change policies.

The present evaluation thereby covers Regulation (EU) 1315/2013 including its related delegated acts concerning network adaptations in EU MS as well as in terms of indicative network extensions to third countries. In terms of geographical scope, the reports covers the EU 27 excluding the UK. The evaluation looked at the time-period of 2013 onwards.

3. Conclusions

The overall evaluation of Regulation (EU) 1315/2013 leads to the following conclusions in terms of “lessons learnt”. Those are grouped in accordance with the five evaluation criteria that have been applied:

Relevance

- All four specific objectives of the TEN-T Regulation remain relevant. Especially for the objectives “efficient infrastructure to facilitate the internal market” and “territorial, economic and social cohesion”, the targets and measures substantiating these objectives remain also widely relevant. The two objectives “sustainability” and “increasing benefits for users”, on the other hand, require substantial reinforcement of underlying targets and measures. It also needs to be underlined that all objectives remain equally important since there are complementary to each other.
- Nevertheless, with regard to the specific objectives “efficiency of infrastructure development to facilitate the internal market” and “social, economic and territorial cohesion”, there is a strong need to advance on requirements enhancing the quality of the TEN-T infrastructure. This is essential to cope with future challenges, also in the context of sustainability and improved user benefits. Some reinforcement may also be needed in relation to the accessibility of peripheral, outermost and insular regions.
- For the specific objective “sustainability”, the lack of appropriateness to enable decarbonisation in line with the objective of the European Green Deal, to cope with the digital transition and with challenges of natural and human-made disasters or other

unforeseen challenges needs to be overcome. This necessitates adjusted targets and reinforced / extended requirements. The reduction of transport emissions by 90% by 2050 cannot be achieved without a proper TEN-T network allowing for greener transport.

- For the specific objective “increasing user benefits”, the TEN-T Regulation could be advanced to strengthen the identification, combination and implementation of projects from the perspective of integrated door-to-door user services. This current lack of appropriateness seems to be particularly evident in the passengers’ sector. In addressing this relevance issue, digitalisation and other new technologies should play a key role.
- For the dual layer trans-European transport network, the design structure (in accordance with the existing network planning methodology) as well as the completion deadlines of 2030 and 2050 have proven their appropriateness.
- To achieve the full and timely completion targets, notably for the core network, the evaluation shows the need to reinforce implementation instruments at EU level and to stimulate a stronger commitment of Member States.
- Complementarity between core and comprehensive networks could be strengthened. This could help overcoming some remaining accessibility and connectivity gaps. Not least, it is expected to help ensuring the broadest possible and most effective coverage of new infrastructure quality parameters, especially for zero and low emission mobility or digitalisation, and it could facilitate a larger reach of innovative user services. Where necessary, strengthened complementarity between core and comprehensive networks could also be ensured through an alignment of standards and requirements in fields such as railway infrastructure, rail safety or urban nodes.

Effectiveness

- Effectiveness of TEN-T implementation – especially in the light of the new challenges and objectives that could be correspondingly extended – could be further enhanced through a strengthening of EU instruments (e.g. European Coordinators, delegated acts, accountability of Member States).

Efficiency

- The TENtec system works relatively well and is mostly appreciated by stakeholders. In relation to the reporting and monitoring obligations set out in the TEN-T Regulation more generally, the evaluation suggests that there is some room for streamlining and strengthening these tools of TEN-T policy.

Coherence

- Achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal would require that the TEN-T infrastructure are fully aligned with the provisions resulting from the other policy initiatives in the fields of AFID, FuelEU Maritime and the ReFuel Aviation.
- In an appropriate way (by taking account of their new qualities in relation to TEN-T policy), there is a need to enhance coherence with the challenges of the digital transition and other new technologies. This requires attention to be given to a proper balance between fixed / long-term infrastructure requirements and fast progressing developments building strongly on industrial innovation; between infrastructure development objectives and changing user needs.

- There is some need for enhancing the inner coherence between the provisions of the TEN-T Regulations.
- Synergies between trans-European network policies in transport, energy and digitalisation are important for higher user benefits, efficiency and the strongest possible contribution to transport decarbonisation.

To conclude: Both the work on core network corridors and the relevant procedures in Member States show that the planning and decision making process on TEN-T has been largely suitable to achieve the policy's objectives, in spite of a need for specific reinforcements.

When the 2013 revision of the TEN-T Regulation saw a shift from a largely priority projects' based approach to a full network approach, this did not disrupt the continuous transport infrastructure development the EU had embarked on under preceding TEN-T legislation. Key projects (notably the former priority projects, often in pivotal geographical positions) remained vital elements of an overall European network. The additional strong focus on the functional side of the network, through a wide range of common standards and requirements, reinforced the link between infrastructure and transport policy objectives as well as service quality. Member States reflect TEN-T development objectives reasonably well in their transport infrastructure related procedures. All this suggests that TEN-T policy, between 2013 and 2020, has well paved its way as the infrastructural enabler for the achievement of transport policy objectives. However, future challenges of the European transport system overall – with ambitious climate change objectives, the digital transition or a significantly enhanced focus on user expectations as embedded in the European Green Deal and more specifically in the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy – will place increasing demand on TEN-T policy towards 2030 / 2050. In this regard, focusing only on a recalibration of certain standards or requirements would not be sufficient to meet the overall objectives of greening, digitalisation and modal shift; instead, an integrated network approach centred on interoperability and efficiency increase and addressing all shortcomings and lessons learnt identified above is needed.

A thorough assessment of the state of implementation of the projects, in particular the projects located on the core network, which should be completed by 2030, is also needed. Based on this assessment possible measures to ensure completion of the network on time and according to the EU standards could be identified.