

The future of EU transport: achieving sustainable, smart and resilient mobility



Freedom of movement is a founding principle of European integration and cornerstone of the internal market, enabling the economic growth and creating jobs. Mobility is a right for all citizens, brings people together and is a precondition for prosperity. The transport, travel and tourism sector, an important part of the EU's economy in terms of its GDP contribution as well as the share of the labour force is, by extension, directly affected by the changes to the mobility of people. To face the challenges such as climate change and the global pandemic and allow people and goods to continue moving freely across the EU, the transport networks must become smarter, more resilient and sustainable.

Sustainable mobility

The transport sector has vast potential to reduce its emissions. While the EU has already overachieved its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by 2020, transport emissions have increased in each of the last 5 years. The EPP calls for a balanced and technologically-neutral decarbonisation, automation and electrification, in a cost-efficient and energy-efficient way. People are willing to switch to more sustainable modes of transport, provided this does not increase costs. Our aim is to put in place suitable alternatives at competitive prices, to enable and incentivise the citizens to make the transition to clean mobility options. At the same time, several challenges persist such as low and uneven penetration rates for sustainable alternative fuels infrastructure or lack of available low carbon mobility solutions in scarcely populated or less developed areas. These have to be acknowledged so that we can include all people in the European Green Deal.

Vehicle manufacturers and consumers need legislative predictability. The emission reduction targets in road transportation should consider all factors – the economic, social and technological capabilities, costs, market affordability and infrastructure adaptability.

The global nature of aviation and maritime transport and their impact on the rise of emissions necessitates an effective international response. The EU should use its position in international organisations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) to ensure ambition in the international carbon offsetting schemes. The UN's Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) has yet to effectively address emissions from international aviation in line with the Paris Agreement. EPP supports strengthening the environmental integrity of the CORSIA instrument while upholding the ETS for all airlines operating in Europe. Ending fossil fuel subsidies and closing taxation loopholes should also be pursued. The EU maritime sector also needs a clear strategy for reducing its emissions based on a basket of measures which include efficiency standards, uptake of alternative fuels in maritime transport, shore side electrification and such as including the EU shipping sector in the EU ETS. LNG deployment will also contribute significantly to the decarbonisation of maritime transport.

We must increase the market share of the sustainable alternative fuels in all transport modes, assess the life-cycle emissions of these fuels and research new alternative fuel solutions. Deployment of clean hydrogen should be advanced by enhanced investments in research and innovation, removal of regulatory barriers and support for demonstration projects. Inland waterways, for example, have underestimated potential for the deployment of clean hydrogen, as well as LNG, sustainable fuels, hybrid and electric vessels and automation. Hard to abate sectors like aviation and maritime will require the development of advanced biofuels or sustainable alternative low or zero carbon fuels and gases, while the electrification of aircrafts could be a suitable solution for the European short-distance, single-leg flights. Sea vessels should be adapted to cleaner fuels instead of heavy oil, while research and development in hybridisation, electrification and digitalisation would further reduce emissions in maritime transport. This requires a strategic value chain alliance to accelerate the large-scale deployment of such fuels and technologies.

Smart mobility

Our motorways need to be equipped with digital networks, electric charging and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure. Airports must use only zero-emissions vehicles. Ports should be outfitted with electric charging and grid points to replace the diesel generation of on-board power of anchored ships. We should boost investments in infrastructure and fleet renewal, facilitate sustainable finance and enable the private sector to advance the research and innovation in new technologies and driving their deployment.

Europe must achieve fully interconnected multimodal system for passenger and freight transport. The planning and purchase of tickets for multimodal journeys should be enhanced, boosting the mobility as a service concept. A European multimodal transport network would realise the potential created by the initiatives in the road, railway and shipping sectors (e.g. the Road the Transport Package, the Single European railway Area, Short-Sea Shipping and NAIADES), connecting them and removing the legislative, administrative, and cross-border obstacles. Effective multimodality would also boost freight by rail and inland waterways, and improve their competitiveness, along with the intermodal maritime logistics chains, so-called “Motorways of the Sea”. There is further potential to increase rail passenger transport, in particular cross-European passenger connections. We should develop intermodal ports platforms and multimodal connections. Airports should be systematically connected to cities through train lines and high-speed trains. It is important to put emphasis on urban mobility and increasing modal shares of collective transport, walking and cycling in cities.

The use of public transport should be encouraged. Citizens will use more public transport if it is of high quality and frequency, and stays at an affordable price. The sector needs investments in fleet renewal, especially in decarbonised vehicles, and good strategic management.

To encourage consumers to choose environmentally friendlier options, the EU should incentivise better consumer choices via polluter- and user-pays principles, carbon pricing, road charging and taxation. All future measures must be science-based and follow comprehensive impact assessments that consider economic, environmental and social consequences. Life-cycle assessment of the environmental performance of transport products and projects should drive the policy development.

Digitalisation would further advance the emissions reductions from the transport sector. Europe must develop cooperative, connected and automated mobility and enable research, innovation and development of emerging, game-changing mobility technologies. We should take full advantage of Intelligent Transport Systems and other smart solutions. We need efficient capacity allocation and traffic management. Only via efficient digital transformation, including data and Artificial Intelligence, can we tap the full potential of the new era.

Resilient mobility

The transport network needs to be made more resilient to better cope with any future challenges and avoid any disruptions. We need to remove obstacles to free movement, upgrade the transport infrastructure and modernise our fleets. Full completion of the Core Trans-European Network (TEN-T) is paramount and the EU should prioritise infrastructure projects that are on this network, simplifying and streamlining the administrative procedures involved, particularly in cross-border projects. Motorways should be upgraded, including with secure freight parking and sanitary units. We must improve road safety and invest proceeds from tolls and vignettes, vehicle, road and environmental taxes and excise duties on fuel in the upkeep, modernisation and improvement of the road infrastructure.

Deploying new technologies, investing in infrastructure and modernising fleets require large investment capabilities. To this aim the transport lending policy of the EIB and the Taxonomy criteria for sustainable finance shall support modernisation in all modes of transport. An investment friendly environment must be maintained for the transport sector especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, during which it has been one of the hardest hit sectors. Private investment must be attracted to complement EU funding, and transport infrastructure investment shall be transformed into a European asset class to attract long-term institutional lenders such as pension and insurance funds.

We should incentivise market opening, regulation, harmonisation and standardisation in railways and inland waterways (for both navigability and equipment), enable Single rail Signalling System and put in place more flexible rules to access the railway infrastructure. We should invest to increase the average speed of rail traffic and improve interoperability and the deployment of the European railway Traffic Management System (ErTMS) to enhance capacity and safety of the European rail network and also envision a high-speed railway network in the EU. European Management of the Railway Traffic could contribute to the effectiveness and attractiveness of rail transport. We need common European standards for urban mobility to overcome the patchwork of local limitations. In aviation, Single European Sky 2+, Clean Sky Joint Undertaking, use of satellites, Single European Sky Air Traffic Management research (SESAR) will improve the efficiency of the sector, as will the revision of state aid rules for airports. Port services should be further liberalised. To tap the full potential of inland waterways, we must enable dedicated financing via the Connecting Europe Facility, the Cohesion Funds, the Recovery and Resilience Facility or with the participation of the European Investment Bank. We should promote roll-On-roll-Off (rO-rO) shipping for freight, thereby reducing the presence of heavy-duty vehicles from our roads.

We must establish a fair system of passenger rights and consumer protection in all modes of transport, especially improving those modes which are publicly funded, so taxpayers see value for their money. It is paramount that the transport costs for households do not increase and remain affordable.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution – all proposed measures should consider the differences between Member States and aim to reduce the backlog of transport projects.

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