



Les défis de développement pour les villes et les régions dans une Europe en mutation

Refining the Cohesion and Competitiveness nexus by tackling new infrastructure needs. Focusing Sustainable Transport.

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Résumé / Summary

The current impact of the economic and financial crisis in the EU has affected different Member States' capacity (and choices) to invest. Targeted investments in infrastructure renewal or construction have been (and still are) major parts of stimulus and recovery plans at EU and Member State levels. All these components provide at a certain extent the rationale why infrastructures remain so far the main pillars of a long-term process towards Europe's sustainable development.

The proposed paper highlights existing policies, planning instruments and review mechanisms in order to build on and better explore the possibility to calibrate cohesion and competitiveness objectives, while balancing existing and growing inequalities, targeting at integrally shifting the European Union (and particular Member States concerned e.g. Greece) on to a sustainable and resilient path. To urge Europe's transformation into a knowledge-intensive, low-carbon and highly competitive economy, from an EC viewpoint, currently requires an adequate, modern and flexible energy, transport and ICT infrastructure networks. By prioritizing the necessity to take forward the transport, energy and telecommunication (digital) infrastructures, acknowledging the need for a truly integrated single market and accepting that transport, energy and broadband networks may share common facilities, depicting new needs for compliance with "interoperability" and "resource efficiency" targets. But, how to meet this major investment/regional policies challenge, without compromising -at the same time- ambitious Cohesion objectives? The proposed paper identifies this central question which remains critical when choosing to discuss recovery, reconstruction, regional and sustainable development efforts.

Originality

Various EC documents indicate that despite significant investment made so far, the European Union does not

currently have a network of interconnected cross-border transport infrastructure that is sufficiently interoperable and resource-efficient.

Against this background the EU intends to make an ambitious commitment in undertaking further greenhouse gas emission reductions in line with the cost-effective pathway described in the 2050 roadmaps, primarily by assisting member states at meeting common energy and climate challenges, more cost-effectively, while furthering market integration and preventing market distortion. Along the same lines, the transport sector must play an important role in terms of achieving reduction of the greenhouse gas emissions and the desired market driven approach but mainly contributing through a modern and coherent infrastructure design and a smarter pricing of infrastructure usage.

For that purpose, the EU foresees a more robust, more binding planning framework, composed of the Core and Comprehensive Networks (TEN), which will end-up to the emergence by 2030 (and 2050 respectively) of a “seamlessly” functional, multi-modal network of European infrastructure. In Article 30 of Regulation (EU)1315/2013 “on Union Guidelines for the development of the TEN-T and the multi-modal core network”, the urban nodes are an integral part of TEN-T. These are scattered along the core network corridors and have become an integral part of the development of the trans-European network (TEN-T). The efficient and effective integration of urban nodes into TEN-T corridors may also envisage development and related recommendations for deployment of innovative solutions in urban areas becoming the test-beds for transport innovation projects, furthering the increase of the interaction level between transport and sustainable development.

Nevertheless, all these new guidelines, from the EU point of view, widely open new opportunities for meeting the sustainability objectives set but, they do not provide so far a direct and tangible contribution in terms of calibrating existing interactions and incompatibilities between cohesion and competitiveness objectives. Urban nodes become the appropriate space for revisiting the existing production model and boosting the expected productive reconstruction. The urban nodes may also present widely differentiated characteristics while experiencing extreme variations from M/S to M/S. Furthermore, when implementing the TEN-Ts it is necessary further explore the potential enlargement of the influence of the urban space, the reviewing of the system of concentration of spaces of production, and the potential interactions with the current hierarchy of the urban nodes, as dispersed in the existing network of settlements, as necessary "revision" areas.

Methodology

The proposed paper attempts an overview of available EC-Academic Bibliography and Data available in the EU and in Greece, in order to reach a realistic conclusion concerning the role of infrastructures in bridging the “cohesion gap” and meeting the “sustainable development” goal in Europe and Greece, across various programming periods. To do so a series of evaluations of various structural funds programming periods (with special emphasis to Greece and the strategic documents and programmes for Transport) are equally focused. Moreover, further desk work will include the review of relevant Studies findings, highlighting the institutional reforms taking place, in parallel to the assessments of structural funds projects/programmes results mainly related to major Transport infrastructures.

Cohesion,Regional Policies,Transport

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