



European Economic and Social Committee

TEN/643

Clean, competitive and connected mobility for all

OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Europe on the move: An agenda for a socially fair transition towards clean, competitive and connected mobility for all

[COM(2017) 283 final]

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1. Conclusions and recommendations

- 1.1 The mobility agenda set out in the Commission communication "Europe on the move" [COM (2017) 283 final] (the communication) reflects Europe's ambition of making rapid progress towards putting in place, by 2025, a clean, competitive and connected mobility system integrating all means of transport and spanning the entire Union. Road transport in Europe, the focus of this communication, relies on an industry that is a world leader in manufacturing and service provision. The production part of this sector employs 11% of all workers in manufacturing across the EU and generates 7% of EU GDP.
- 1.2 The communication highlights the link to the overarching priorities of the Energy Union, the Digital Single Market and the Investment Plan for Europe. In particular, it seeks to resolve some outstanding single market transport issues while maintaining a balanced perspective on human and labour rights and environmental aspects.
- 1.3 A well-functioning **Single European Transport Area** depends on an adequate regulatory framework. The EESC is of the opinion that the proposed changes in legislation regarding access to the profession, market access – including cabotage – and working conditions, such as driving and rest time and specific rules on the posting of workers in road transport mostly fail to effectively resolve the problems they address. The specific proposals on these issues are covered in more detail in separate Committee opinions. The EESC underscores the urgency of finding adequate and smoothly working solutions, considering the vital importance of a fit for purpose regulatory framework to ensure a well functioning internal market. The EESC in this context underlines that it expects that the upcoming proposal regarding combined transport will address also market access issues.
- 1.4 Land transport technology will most likely be revolutionised by **digitalisation** and automation. These technologies offer a wealth of new features for consumers and businesses who want better quality, convenience, flexibility, affordability and safety in the services they use and in equipment of all kinds. The EESC notes that this new technology has the capacity to both improve transport market efficiencies but also to provide analytical data to assist in the control and enforcement of existing legislation and the protection of human and social rights.
- 1.5 Automatic driving now has the potential to be a game-changer that, as well as providing new services and business opportunities, could markedly improve the active safety of vehicles and significantly reduce fatalities. The EESC encourages the Commission to pursue the **Vision Zero by 2050** project further, since its goals are of the utmost importance for our society and all citizens.
- 1.6 The EESC strongly supports the Commission's proposal to overcome the poor interoperability between the various existing electronic **road toll** systems in the Member States and implement a common interoperability framework. The EESC also considers that a flexible, fair and transparent, non-discriminatory road pricing system which complies with the "user pays" and "polluter pays" principles would have a positive effect provided the revenues are earmarked. Full earmarking of revenues could bring to Europe more than 500 000 additional employment opportunities.

- 1.7 The EESC notes the discrepancy between anticipated **emission reduction** (13%) in road transport under this package and the necessary 18-19% that the transport sector would need to contribute towards achieving the 2030 climate and energy targets. This gap can only be bridged if Member States make substantial efforts to stimulate the introduction of "clean" road transport initiatives.
- 1.8 The EESC would like to emphasise that the production of clean electricity is an indispensable condition for a successful introduction of **electric vehicles** (EV) into the mass market. Irrespective of the particular source of electricity, however, EVs can help to reduce air pollution locally, while the global objectives of the EU with respect to GHG emission can only be achieved by a clean electricity generation policy.
- 1.9 Consumer confidence in the automotive industry and the regulatory system has recently been severely compromised. Rebuilding trust by means of realistic **emission standards** and adequate test procedures is vital and the Committee regrets that the independent EU-wide vehicle emissions testing oversight authority proposed by the Commission was dropped earlier in 2017 after opposition from some Member States.
- 1.10 Clear and challenging targets need to be set in Europe for clean energy-powered vehicles in order to stimulate the manufacturing sector in the areas of **research**, market introduction and production. The technical limitations which are still hindering a faster introduction of alternative traction systems can only be overcome by a robust research programme (in the next Framework Programme) spanning the full range between fundamental research, innovation and market introduction.
- 1.11 The Committee would like greater recognition of the importance of supporting modal shift with more incentives to encourage public transport and moving freight from road to rail. The overall strategy may help to decarbonise road transport but will not necessarily deal with congestion and pollution, particularly as demand for road transport is expected to continue to grow.

2. **Introduction**

- 2.1 The communication is the first substantial phase of the Mobility Package, with further proposals to follow later in the year. It places the specific proposals, which are covered in separate Committee opinions, in a political context, sets out supporting measures – such as road charging (including the required infrastructure), alternative fuels and connectivity, better information for consumers, a stronger internal market and improved working conditions in the road haulage sector – and proposes steps to "lay the ground" for cooperative, connected and automated mobility. In practice, the Commission's proposal primarily involves the road transport sector.
- 2.2 The communication also highlights the link to the overarching priorities of the Energy Union (energy efficiency and decarbonisation of the transport sector, including deployment of low-carbon fuels and promotion of electromobility), the Digital Single Market, the jobs, growth and investment agenda and the Investment Plan for Europe to support its implementation, and the aims of improving fairness and strengthening the social dimension set out in the European Pillar

of Social Rights. It seeks to resolve some outstanding single market transport issues while maintaining a balanced view of human and labour rights and environmental aspects – though some tensions remain.

- 2.3 The mobility agenda reflects Europe's ambition of making rapid progress towards putting in place, by 2025, a clean, competitive and connected mobility system integrating all means of transport, spanning the entire Union and connecting it to its neighbours and to the world. Achieving this highly ambitious objective relies both on an industry that is a world leader in manufacturing and service provision and on strong and effective political will on the part of the Member States.
- 2.4 It must be borne in mind that EU countries get over EUR 500 billion in tax revenues from the vehicle transport sector. The production part of this sector employs 11% of all workers in manufacturing across the EU and generates 7% of EU GDP and EUR 90 billion in trade surpluses. It is such a powerful and important sector, in fact, that progress in many areas of EU-wide regulation and improvement has been slow precisely because several Member States regard the sector as being of national strategic importance. Changes that are seen to affect national systems and priorities, such as market opening and road charging, often take a long time to be adopted and implemented.
- 2.5 The EU is not starting from zero. Implementation of the internal market and sustainability objectives have yielded significant results. The EESC has already expressed its views in a number of opinions, such as those addressing the single European transport area¹ as a backbone of the free internal market, multimodal travel² and the internal market of international road freight³. The sustainable development of the EU transport policy⁴ plays a big role, in particular the decarbonisation of transport⁵ and the impact of the COP21 conclusions on European transport policy⁶. The implications of the digitalisation and robotisation of transport for EU policy-making⁷, as well as the prospects for Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems⁸, will be increasingly important elements in EU transport policy, also addressed by the EESC.
- 2.6 Nevertheless, much remains to be done. The mobility agenda needs to pave the way for a European transport system that can cope with the main challenges driven by digitalisation and the environmental impact.

1 [OJ C 291, 4.9.2015, p. 14.](#)

2 [OJ C 12, 15.1.2015, p. 81.](#)

3 [OJ C 13, 15.1.2016, p. 176.](#)

4 [OJ C 248, 25.8.2011, p. 31.](#)

5 [OJ C 173, 31.5.2017, p. 55.](#)

6 [OJ C 303, 19.8.2016, p. 10.](#)

7 Digitalisation and robotisation of transport, TEN/632 (not yet published in the OJ).

8 [OJ C 288, 31.8.2017, p. 85.](#)

3. Digitalisation

- 3.1 Digitalisation and automation based on a fast and reliable internet offer a wealth of new features for consumers and businesses who want better quality, convenience, flexibility, affordability and safety in the services they use and in equipment of all kinds. They also offer effective new techniques for analysis, control and enforcement of existing legislation and the protection of human and social rights. Ground transport technology, in particular, will most likely be revolutionised by digitalisation. One general aim must be to harmonise systems or find technical solutions to enable them to operate across borders, as this is vital to the smooth functioning of the internal market. An example of this is the imminent introduction of smart tachographs. However, there is a 15-year schedule for the proposed retrofit of existing vehicles. This timeline should be substantially reduced.
- 3.2 The EU's strategy for **cooperative, connected and automated mobility** (C-ITS) and its implementation describes the first steps towards automated driving (see also TEN/621). The **connectivity** among vehicles and between vehicles and fixed infrastructure is a key feature that will be necessary to make full use of digital technology. The EESC therefore welcomes the strategic objectives for 2025 presented in a recent communication on the "European Gigabit Society"⁹. This set a timetable for developing the European high-capacity broadband infrastructure that would provide uninterrupted 5G coverage with very high-capacity internet connectivity along all major terrestrial transport paths.
- 3.3 Digitalisation will also be key for the development of new market models, including various types of platforms and **sharing economy** concepts that have the potential to improve resource efficiency but also raise a number of legal, social and consumer-related issues, such as the role and status of internet platforms and changes on the labour market.
- 3.4 The potential for **automatic driving**, including with driverless cars, is mainly seen as an opportunity for new business models. However, questions of responsibility are also important and need to be made clear in the EU in a harmonised way. Another consequence of automatic or semi-automatic driving is that it could significantly improve the active safety of ground vehicles. Road fatalities have fallen by a factor of four since the 1970s, primarily thanks to the introduction of passive safety features in cars. Nevertheless, 25 500 people still unfortunately lost their lives on EU roads in 2016. Now, by developing and introducing advanced active safety features (semi-automatic driving, connected cars), it should be possible to reduce fatalities significantly, or even eliminate them entirely, as set out in the Vision Zero safety project. This project, which started in Sweden back in 1997, was later taken up by the EU but never achieved the anticipated results. Automatic driving now has the potential to be a game-changer. The EESC encourages the Commission to pursue the **Vision Zero by 2050** project further, since this goal is of the utmost importance for our society and all citizens.

⁹ [OJ C 125, 21.4.2017, p. 51.](#)

4. **The Single European Transport Area**

- 4.1 The EESC welcomes the fact that the Commission has taken the initiative of clarifying the regulatory framework on the road transport market and ensuring better enforcement, while improving working conditions and combating social dumping in order to ensure a well-functioning internal market in the sector. The proposed changes address access to the profession, market access – including cabotage – and working conditions, such as driving and rest time and specific rules on the posting of workers in road transport.

However, the EESC thinks that the proposed changes in legislation, despite showing an ambition to make regulations easily enforceable and guarantee fair competition, mostly fail to effectively resolve the problems they address, including those that have emerged when implementing the current framework. The EESC notes that the initiative has generated diverging points of view among Member States, social partners and operators. It maintains that the only sustainable way forward is through clear and easily enforceable legislation that delivers legal security regarding market access and adequate protection of social rights. The EESC also stresses the need to use modern IT (tachographs, etc.) and efficient infrastructure (secure parking spaces) to help implementation and enforcement. A surprising feature of the communication is that combined transport is addressed not as a market access issue, but only as a matter of optimising sustainability. (For details of the EESC positions on these proposals, see the separate opinions adopted).

- 4.2 The EESC welcomes the intention of amending the directive on the use of **vehicles hired without drivers** for the carriage of goods by road but wishes to express some reservations concerning possible consequences. These fall into two categories: the first concerns the possible growth of letterbox companies (LBCs), while the second relates to the possibility of an operator undertaking illegal cabotage without being detected.
- 4.3 The EESC considers that the implementation of a flexible, fair, transparent, non-discriminatory and non-bureaucratic **road pricing** system, which complies with the "user pays" and "polluter pays" principles, would have a positive effect if the revenues for the use of road infrastructure were earmarked and the transport internal market was kept free from discriminatory practices. Full earmarking of revenues could bring to Europe more than 500 000 additional employment opportunities. The EESC strongly supports the Commission's proposal to overcome the poor interoperability between the various existing electronic road toll systems in the Member States and to introduce a uniform electronic road toll system throughout the EU based on advanced technology. (For more details of these positions see the EESC opinions adopted on these specific issues).

5. **Towards a sustainable transport system**

- 5.1 Transport contributes about 20% of Europe's **greenhouse gas emissions**. While transport activity is growing, greenhouse gas emissions need to fall to meet the EU's energy and climate objectives for 2030. Consequently, the "Clean Energy for all Europeans" package of November

2016 included action to accelerate the deployment of low-carbon transport fuels and to support electro-mobility, which has been welcomed by the EESC¹⁰.

- 5.2 Overall, the declining trend in total transport emissions is expected to continue under current trends and adopted policies, leading to 13% lower emissions by 2030 compared with 2005 (and 15% by 2050). This, however, is not in line with the cost-effective emissions reduction of 18-19% that the transport sector would need to contribute towards achieving the 2030 climate and energy targets. The EESC agrees that setting limits for emissions of new vehicles is an effective tool to reduce emissions but not enough to achieve the fixed targets. They should therefore be complemented by measures to further improve energy efficiency and promote alternative fuels and propulsion systems, including LNG and electricity through on-board systems or electrified roads, as well as **road charging**.
- 5.3 Expectations for **electric vehicles** (EV) are high, as exemplified by announcements from Member States that they will be following the lead of Norway (2025), France and the UK (2040) in banning all new internal combustion engine (petrol and diesel) cars. EVs are showing rapid market growth worldwide. The number of electric cars on the road globally hit two million in 2016, but they still make up only 0.2% of all passenger cars (IEA 2017). The strongest absolute growth is happening in China and is mainly driven by air pollution problems and reduction targets. In Europe, clear and challenging targets need to be set for clean energy powered vehicles in order to stimulate the manufacturing sector in the areas of research and production.
- 5.4 Faster introduction of EVs has been hindered by **technical limitations** related to the performance of the batteries. While the cost of batteries is falling faster than expected, there are still some problems with (in some cases conflicting) parameters which limit the performance of EVs: the weight, the charging capacity (range limit), the charging speed and lifetime/deterioration issues. Nevertheless, electric vehicles are coming to be recognised as the major future growth area in cars and light commercial vehicles.
- 5.5 The technical limitations can only be overcome by a robust **research** programme spanning the full range between fundamental research and innovation. Europe's research programmes, notably Horizon 2020, are well focused and research is active in various alternative fields, such as new types of batteries or fuel cells and hydrogen. The goals are promising but a large proportion of this research is still at an early stage. Nevertheless, we already have some initial results, as demonstrated by the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (www.fch.europa.eu).
- 5.6 In order to overcome uncertainties about the future of traction systems for vehicles, the European Union needs to continue with a dedicated transport-related **research priority** in the next Framework Programme, for which European Transport Research and Innovation Strategies as outlined by the European Commission and European Technology Platforms such as Advisory Council for Aviation Research and Innovation in Europe are forming a sound basis.

¹⁰ [OJ C 246, 28.7.2017, p. 64](http://oj.c246.28.7.2017.p.64).

Furthermore, collaboration covering the entire Technology Readiness Levels chain from basic research up to application is the most effective way towards market introduction.

- 5.7 The EESC would like to reiterate¹¹ the fact that there is a lack of **harmonisation** between national and EU research funding. For example, the Power-to-X concept – that is, the electrochemical conversion of steam and carbon dioxide with the use of renewably generated electricity for the production of synfuels – is strongly supported by a German funding programme¹², with no complementary approach on the EU side.
- 5.8 Based on existing technology, Europe currently has a strongly growing demand for batteries. The large majority of global cell production capacity remains in Asia and the US. The EESC shares the Commission's concerns that the automotive industry will be dependent to a large extent on imports of battery cells, exposing their sourcing to various risks. A local **European battery industry** capable of serving demand is in the interest of European car manufacturers.
- 5.9 Support for electromobility is not limited to the development of batteries. For heavy goods vehicles, in particular, alternative solutions include the option for **electrified roads** with electric propulsion through overhead wires or rails in the road surface (e-Highway etc.). A common issue for alternative propulsion systems is the importance of developing common standards in order to enable cross-border traffic and to create at least an EU-wide – and preferably a worldwide – market. The TEN-T network, especially the Core Network Corridors, might be a tool for this.
- 5.10 The **internal combustion engine**, which represents the backbone of our mobility on roads, is increasingly facing opposition. There has been a serious loss of trust in companies and the regulatory system related to vehicle emissions, in particular now that the existence of illegal defeat devices has been unveiled. These interfere with or disable emissions controls under real-world driving conditions. Even without illegal tricks, however, it is well known that vehicles that pass formal emissions testing normally produce much higher levels of pollution in real-world driving conditions. The fact that this discrepancy has become larger over recent decades is the main reason for today's problems. There is an urgent need to restore consumer confidence in the automotive industry and rebuild trust in the regulatory system, by means of realistic emissions standards and adequate test procedures. The Committee regrets that the independent EU-wide vehicle emissions testing oversight authority proposed by the Commission was dropped earlier in 2017, after opposition from some Member States.
- 5.11 Nonetheless, the debate about combustion engines versus electric traction has to go beyond emissions standards. We need, in particular, to distinguish between the effects on **global** warming and those on **local** air pollution. To minimise local air pollution, the first choice are EVs with zero local emissions. However, EVs are normally not free of emissions when considered globally. The level of emissions depends on the method of electricity generation for charging batteries and the manufacturing processes for the batteries. Since the share of carbon-

¹¹ [OJ C 34, 2.2.2017, p. 66.](#)

¹² <https://www.kopernikus-projekte.de/projekte/power-to-x>.

free electricity generation shows large disparities in the Member States, it is evident that the success of EVs in helping to meet the EU's climate objectives depends on the country in which the EV is operating. The EU's support for **electromobility** has to take into account the fact that this issue is intimately connected to the field of electricity generation as discussed in the context of the **European Energy Union**.

- 5.12 Combustion engines on the road are currently superior for long-distance driving and heavy-duty work. With respect to how fast electric traction can catch up, we should be prepared for a **long transition time** with the co-existence of both traction systems. Hybrid cars, for example, which can switch between combustion for long-distance driving and electric traction within the city, may provide a solution for which the European car industry is well prepared. For some uses (such as long-distance cargo), battery electric vehicles are not suitable. There is a broad range of alternative technologies that can be used, such as hydrogen fuel cells and electrified highways. Europe needs to invest in their development to build industrial leadership in green transport.
- 5.13 The EESC supports the development of professional training on logistics across all Member States to provide the new skills in support of the initiatives in this package.
- 5.14 It is worth noting that major cities throughout the EU have independently established a wide range of initiatives to deal with congestion and pollution. The EESC encourages the Commission to expand its existing work with municipal authorities on best practice and dissemination of information.

Brussels, 18 October 2017.

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The president of the European Economic and Social Committee
