



TEN/728

Evaluation – 2011 White Paper on Transport

OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

**Commission Staff Working Document – Evaluation of the White Paper
Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource-efficient
transport system**

[SWD(2020) 410 final]

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1. Conclusions and recommendations

- 1.1 The EESC welcomes this initiative to evaluate the implementation of the White Paper 2011, but regrets the delay in launching the evaluation and the fact that it was only addressed to the Committee at the Committee's own request.
- 1.2 In future, the EESC wishes to be able to benefit from regular progress reports on implementation of Commission strategies and to be able to give its contribution in the area of transport. Furthermore, the EESC recommends that future strategic documents have a clear monitoring plan prepared from the beginning.
- 1.3 The EESC hopes that these evaluations will take the form of regular and dedicated progress reports at intervals enabling a real assessment to be made of progress, delays and their causes and, where fitting, possible remedial measures to be taken. It is important to assess in a timely manner what was achieved and what was not and why (e.g. co-modality, better situation with railways, congestion, social issues, environmental goals, etc.) and act accordingly.
- 1.4 The Committee supports the greening of transport, but stresses that the energy transition must be fair and – without denying its objectives – provide viable and realistic alternatives that take account of the specific economic and social territorial features and needs of all parts of Europe, including rural areas.
- 1.5 The Committee also reiterates its stated views regarding the White Paper, to the effect that curbing modality is not an option, that co-modality and not modal shift should be aimed at, that a green transition must both be socially just and preserve the competitiveness of European transport, including through full implementation of the European Transport Area, with full implementation of the Single Market. The EESC in this context also regrets the delays in implementation of the TEN-T.
- 1.6 The EESC, as already stated in its 2012 opinion, would like to encourage an open, continuous and transparent exchange of views on the implementation of the White Paper between civil society (business, employers, employees, users, NGOs and academia, etc.), the Commission and other relevant players such as national authorities at different levels. This will improve civil society buy-in and understanding, as will useful feedback to policy makers and those carrying out implementation.
- 1.7 The EESC reiterates the statement made in its 2011 opinion on the *Social aspects of EU transport policy*. The EESC urges the European Commission to put in place the necessary measures to ensure the harmonisation of social standards for intra-EU traffic, bearing in mind also the need for an international level playing field in this respect.

- 1.8 The new *Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future* was the subject of an EESC opinion (TEN/729) adopted on 28 April 2021. The EESC again argues strongly for the implementation of all its conclusions and recommendations.
- 1.9 The EESC will pay close attention to the future Fit for 55 strategy and work on several opinions on this legislative package, which the Commission is due to publish on 14 July.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 On 10 December 2020, a Staff Working Document entitled *Evaluation of the White Paper Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system* [SWD (2020)] was published. The European Economic and Social Committee had been consulted in 2011 when the roadmap was drawn up. It adopted opinion TEN/454 on 26 October 2011. Following the publication of the SWD evaluation (2020), the European Economic and Social Committee decided to look at the evaluation carried out against the backdrop of the objectives set out in the Roadmap and of opinion TEN/454 and developments since its publication.
- 2.2 Since the adoption of the White Paper, numerous Commission initiatives covering all types of transport have been carried out (Fourth Railway Package, the 2016 European Strategy for low-emission mobility, the Directive on alternative fuels infrastructure, three mobility packages on various aspects of road transport, the Regulation on port services, blue belt, aviation strategy, NAIADES programme, European Accessibility Act, the Regulation on Trans-European Transport Networks and the Regulation on the Connecting Europe Facility, etc.). The evaluation offers an opportunity to highlight the technical, political and social progress, and in particular the road transport regulation part of the mobility package adopted in 2020, while pointing out the goals that have not been met.
- 2.3 Achievements should be assessed against the original 2011 targets, which could not take into account events which have taken place since then, whether geopolitical (Brexit, the rise of China), environmental (no sign of global warming slowing down or of collective ability to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement) or in the area of health (COVID-19 crisis). The health crisis has highlighted Europe's dependence on imports of goods strategic for sovereignty and has triggered a historic European act of interventionism (EUR 750 billion recovery plan), itself following the profound change in European environmental policy ambitions with a target of carbon neutrality by 2050 and a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the transport sector as part of the European Green Deal.

- 2.4 The EESC takes note of the 2016 Commission staff working document evaluating the roadmap's implementation¹, which concludes that regarding the goals set in the White Paper, the time passed since its adoption is in most cases still too short to properly assess progress achieved. The evaluation points out that efforts are being made to improve the relevant indicators and refers to stakeholders' expectations of a better focus on implementation, increased investments in transport infrastructure, better consideration of the needs of transport users and workers, a stronger Single European Transport Area and technological developments.
- 2.5 While it attempts to confine itself to the scope of the evaluation document, this opinion cannot completely disregard global developments. Therefore, the reader of the opinion is encouraged on every point to ask what the potential, foreseeable or possible short-, medium- and long-term impact of these events might be, which will only become apparent with time.
- 2.6 The EESC confirms its view stated in its opinion on the Roadmap, on the importance of getting civil society involved regarding the Roadmap's implementation and evaluation. The EESC adopted in 2015 an opinion on the Roadmap's progress and challenges at the request of the European Parliament, which in September 2015 adopted a Resolution on the roadmap's implementation. In the 2016 SWD, several EU bodies' opinions were presented, which the EESC sees as good practice.

3. **General comments**

- 3.1 The EESC welcomes this evaluation initiative, and the opportunity it provides it make its point of view known and which should be used first and foremost to prioritise the developments, progress and delays pointed out in the document. For the future, the EESC wishes to be regularly informed of the progress of the strategies implemented by means of such evaluation work carried out at intervals appropriate to each project. The EESC hopes that these evaluations will not just take stock as a matter of course of progress and delays, but also set out the key elements behind such progress and delays, as well as international developments and initiatives that have, or may have, an impact on the initial roadmaps.
- 3.2 In its opinion of October 2011, the EESC criticised the fact that very few deadlines were included in the list of proposed measures and that the Roadmap did not clearly link strategic measures (with a 2050 deadline) with tactical measures (which could have started to be taken immediately). The opinion called for the Roadmap to – in particular – establish a more detailed work plan for the period 2013-2020. In its 2015 opinion, the EESC suggested a general re-assessment of the action plan in annex I to the Roadmap in terms of its current political feasibility. It is clear that, in 2018, the progress made on the three specific targets (GHG

¹ SWD(2016) 226.

emissions – 60% reduction on 1990 by 2050 and 20% reduction on 2008 by 2030; fossil fuel dependency, limiting congestion growth) was modest. GHG emissions were 32% above 1990 and grew over the period 2013-2018. Fossil fuels still accounted for the bulk of the energy needs of the transport sector. Although their share had been declining over recent years, the rate of decline, closely linked to the implementation of the various countries' environmental regulations, was insufficient. With regard to the congestion indicators, however, the unquantified, unambitious objective still seems not to have been met. The EESC points out, however, that the new ways of organising work generated by the health crisis are opening up new possibilities for systems.

- 3.3 In the 2011 opinion, the EESC supports the Roadmap's strategy of making greater use of market-driven measures. In its 2015 opinion, the EESC pointed out the need to pay attention inter alia to cohesion aspects of the polluter pays principle and the need to consider risks of social exclusion and the need to ensure coherence with taxes and charges in general. However, owing to the failure to slow down global warming, the lessons learned from the health crisis and the major role played by political authorities during and, in all probability, after the crisis, the EESC calls on Europe and Member States' public authorities to play their full part in steering the changes needed for a sustainable future, in particular by speeding up investment programmes.
- 3.4 Most of the initiatives provided for in the White Paper are directed towards the implementation of a co-modal transport system within a Single European Transport Area. The EESC reiterates its support for co-modality. The EESC, in this context, also draws attention to the need to fully implement in practice the formal market opening achieved with the fourth railway package in order to make rail an attractive partner in multimodality terms, taking also into consideration the environmental and social issues.
- 3.5 In 2011 and 2015, the EESC pointed to a lack of realism regarding how to achieve greening the system and the cost. Given the delays observed and the health crisis and its economic consequences, the EESC is deeply concerned about players' ability to finance the necessary changes.
- 3.6 The initial target of a 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions in the transport sector by 2050 was very ambitious, particularly given the figures for the end of 2018 and the outlook set out in the evaluation, which indicated that without additional policies or stronger existing measures the target will not be achieved. The EESC calls for the fresh impetus provided by the European Green Deal to be enshrined in a European research and development policy commensurate with the challenges and to be steered according to a tighter implementation timetable.
- 3.7 The Committee suggests that a tighter timetable and medium-term objectives not be limited to CO₂ emissions but that specific, quantified targets be set for reducing oil dependency, noise emissions and air pollution. The Committee stresses that the energy transition must not lead

to a deterioration in living standards in some parts of Europe. The transition must be fair and take into account, economic, social and territorial specificities, without negating its goals.

- 3.8 In line with its earlier opinions (2011 and 2015), the EESC stresses the importance of the statement made in paragraph 18 in the Roadmap that "curbing mobility is not an option". It should be stressed that this statement should not be interpreted as running counter to any measure aimed at making transport more energy efficient and reducing emissions. Europe is going through a period when it is battling headwinds, so to speak. However, these must not be allowed to throw it off course. Good progress has been made on the Roadmap's objectives relating to the organisation of the European internal market. It would be highly damaging for the social and environmental requirements of the various European initiatives to fall behind in the coming years.
- 3.9 The Roadmap caters for the need to enhance the competitiveness of alternative modes to road transport. The Committee continues to support this aim, as long as it is achieved by promoting higher capacity and quality in rail, inland waterways and short sea shipping as well as efficient intermodal services, and not by hindering development of efficient and sustainable road services within the EU.
- 3.10 The EESC welcomes the progress made on social matters (creation of the European Labour Authority, incorporation of the ILO Maritime Labour Convention into European law, implementation of the surveillance measures provided for in the December 2011 road haulage package, etc.). The EESC is concerned at the tensions that have arisen owing to diverging social protection and wage levels in the road haulage market, as well as the fact that certain working conditions are not decent. As in 2011 and 2015, the EESC calls for an increase in road safety, social standards and human and financial resources to monitor compliance with texts and legislation. Finally, the EESC would also like the Commission to address the issue of "employees/self-employed" on home delivery platforms. As in its TEN/697 opinion, the Committee calls for the promotion of employment and the combating of social dumping.
- 3.11 In its earlier opinions (2011 and 2015), the EESC had expressed serious doubts as to the appropriateness of the specific modal shift goal of the Roadmap: i.e. 30% of road freight over 300 km to shift to other modes such as rail or water-borne transport by 2030 and more than 50% by 2050. The evaluation clearly shows that, to date, changes in the distribution of transport modes have not taken place. The EESC, in this regard, agrees with the statement in the 2015 resolution of the European Parliament on the implementation of the roadmap that the modal shift strategy of the roadmap is not a success and that therefore the sustainability of all modes should be improved and co-modality solutions sought. The European Green Deal, with its target of reducing transport GHG emissions by 90% by 2050, moves the goalposts without addressing the practical questions raised by this new objective.

- 3.12 The EESC reiterates its concerns regarding the competitiveness of Europe and its companies. The EESC is of the firm opinion that global measures are preferred. Regional or continental measures – like European consumer rights, social standards and sustainability measures – should also apply to transport companies coming from non-EU countries, operating to, from and in the internal market, leading to a global level playing field and avoiding carbon leakage and job losses.
- 3.13 The EESC takes note that both previous evaluations largely maintain that it is too early to fully evaluate the outcome of the implementation of the roadmap. The EESC considers it unsatisfactory that insufficient evaluation criteria seem to be at hand to achieve a credible stocktaking at any point in time of the evaluation of the strategy. In particular, such a statement appears unsatisfactory when implementation activities have been ongoing for respectively five (2016) and nine (2020) years. The EESC, in this context, refers to the recommendation in its 2011 opinion for a more precise work plan for the 2013-2020 period which makes an evaluation easier.
- 3.14 Both the 2016 and the 2020 evaluations attach considerable importance to the full implementation of the Single European Transport Area, and the 2020 evaluation particularly pinpoints the EU single market as a strong driver for cost-efficient change, including in particular widespread acceptance of technological change, and points to the importance of this for fostering public and private investments therein. Against the backdrop of that statement, the EESC finds it surprising that more attention is not given to the link between the sustainability and digitalisation objectives and the single market in the Commission's 2020 Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, including social and cohesion aspects. For reasons like this, the EESC regrets that the 2020 evaluation was not terminated before the new strategy was decided. This would have made it possible to profit from the conclusions of the evaluation when establishing the strategy.
- 3.15 The EESC regrets that the evaluation does not adequately highlight the problems and delays in implementing TEN-T, and in particular the core network corridors.
- 3.16 The EESC draws attention to the importance of getting the support of civil society and stakeholders, including through a participatory dialogue as suggested in the EESC's 2012 opinion. Wide understanding and acceptance of policy objectives will be extremely helpful to achieve results.

4. Specific comments

- 4.1 The EESC continues to support the trans-European transport networks programme. In connection with the Green Deal, it has called for, calls for and will continue to call for policies

for investment in modern infrastructure adapted to future challenges². The EESC continues to support the trans-European transport networks programme. Moreover, the Committee recommends prioritising direct links between airport hubs and the high-speed railway network, the existence of which must be a prerequisite before discussing a possible ban on short-haul flights.

- 4.2 The EESC reiterates its support for the creation and implementation of a Single European Sky. Echoing its TEN/697 opinion and in the light of the crisis, the Committee calls on the Member States and all aviation stakeholders to facilitate the complete and rapid implementation of the EU's ambitious targets for the safety, cost efficiency, capacity and sustainability of its air transport sector.
- 4.3 In its transport policy in the railway sector, the European Commission has so far focused mainly on competition within the railway sector, instead of consistently pursuing environmental policy objectives from the White Paper on Transport. The EESC underlines that integrated railway systems can guarantee fair allocation as well as non-integrated systems. Unbundling has had different consequences in different Member States, depending on the state of the infrastructure, the quality and size of the vehicle fleet, the model of unbundling. The competitiveness of new private carriers is often based on the low level of working conditions. "One model fits all" in the railway sector is not good – geographical specifics, scope, indentation of lines, ways of operating freight and passengers' transport should be taken into consideration.
- 4.4 The considerable sums it is planned to mobilise in the cause of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and reducing GHG by least 50% by 2030 are likely to be a challenge for the transport sector. The EESC calls for the creation of a "Transport JTF (Just Transition Fund)" in order to specifically support the sector's workers and businesses, which are not all large entities.
- 4.5 Since 2011, progress has been made in the social sector, in particular with the implementation of the 2006 ILO Maritime Labour Convention. However, these minimum rules cannot provide the workers concerned with working conditions commensurate with the European project. Following the abandonment of the European flag project, the EESC urges the European Commission to put in place the necessary measures to ensure the harmonisation of social standards for traffic within the EU, bearing in mind also the need for an international level playing field in this respect.
- 4.6 With regard to the creation of a European register and flag, the EESC notes that the evaluation ignores the many, complex reasons why this has not been achieved.

² EESC opinion on the *Sustainable development of the EU transport policy and planning for TEN-T* (exploratory opinion), [OJ C 248, 25.8.2011, p. 31](#) (TEN/446).

- 4.7 As regards the European Transport research, innovation and deployment strategy, the new objectives of the European Green Deal require efficient ways of mobilising resources and closer coordination of the various stakeholders in the sector.
- 4.8 The EESC reiterates the statement it made in its 2011 opinion on the Social aspects of EU transport policy, in which it recommends "attracting women and young workers to employment opportunities in the transport sector with measures which improve employment quality across all modes of transport, working conditions, training and Lifelong Learning (LLL), career opportunities, operational and occupational health and safety and which contribute to a better work-life-balance"³.
- 4.9 The EESC reiterates the need to establish a Social, Employment and Training Observatory in the transport sector. Incentives for adopting quality standards throughout the entire transport sector are needed.
- 4.10 In its 2011 opinion, the EESC pointed out that "overall, the social dimension of the roadmap is weak". The EESC makes the same comment on the evaluation document. The EESC sees the need for social evaluation, to be linked to the request to set up the Social Affairs Observatory in the previous point, as a priority. The changes and the pace of change required of the sector will of necessity put pressure on the organisations and the men and women who bring them to life.
- 4.11 The health crisis and the development of online sales with home or near-to-home delivery have increased "individualised" transport of goods in urban areas in particular. The acceleration of these distribution methods contributes to urban congestion and pollution, and, as in the context of energy, it raises the question of the last mile. The challenges posed by this type of consumption are increasing, bringing a need for even faster deployment of measures to reduce CO₂ emissions, especially in a densely populated environment.
- 4.12 The EESC notes the progress made in the electric vehicle fleet and the widely differing situations across the countries of the EU. These advances, which are essentially the result of each Member State's legislation, require infrastructure and raise standardisation issues. In its opinion on this matter⁴, the Committee expressed its strong support for moves toward the wider uptake of electric vehicles. It welcomes the use of decarbonised energy but with caution.

³ EESC opinion on *How EU policies have impacted on the job opportunities, the training needs and the working conditions of transport workers* (exploratory opinion), [OJ C 248, 25.8.2011, p. 22](#) (CESE 1006/2011).

⁴ EESC opinion on *Toward the wider uptake of electric vehicles* (exploratory opinion), [OJ C 44, 11.2.2011, p. 47](#) (CESE 989/2010).

- 4.13 The EESC notes that the White Paper deals mostly with technological innovation and overlooks other important aspects of sustainable mobility policies, which may also be innovative (e.g. soft measures and social innovation, like new approaches to planning, citizen involvement, innovative ways of raising awareness, etc.). Therefore, a broader definition of innovation is needed.
- 4.14 Although non-motorised transport was recognised in 2011, its promotion still lacks attention and coherence. Many cities are investing in walking and cycling infrastructure (e.g. through ERDF programmes). However, the European Union currently does not have a strategy or the administrative and management capacities to address this area in a comprehensive, cross-sectoral and integrated manner. The EESC would like to refer to its opinion regarding the important potential health benefits of active modes of transport such as cycling and walking in Europe, where small actions were purposefully suggested to unleash the potential of cycling and walking in terms of health benefits and accessibility for EU citizens. Therefore, the EESC suggests preparing an EU strategy for non-motorised transport. This would result in concrete EU actions in terms of strategic planning, designing and investing in cycling and walking.
- 4.15 In regards to urban mobility plans, since the publication of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) guidelines in 2013, the Commission has funded hundreds of cities across Europe through EU funds (e.g. CIVITAS initiative) to ensure the balanced and integrated development of sustainable urban transport modes. This is illustrated by the impressive and prolific take-up of SUMPs in Europe. Importantly, this follows a participatory approach with people's needs at the centre of the process. Comprehensive sustainable urban mobility planning has proven to be an effective way to tackle climate, energy and environment challenges. The EESC would like to encourage a needed European initiative towards building national frameworks in EU countries for developing and implementing SUMPs as main strategic tools for planning urban mobility.
- 4.16 Regarding communication and knowledge transfer on urban mobility, the EESC notes the great work done with the establishment of the ELTIS portal in 2014 as an urban mobility observatory which contributes to the visibility of trends and good practices.
- 4.17 The measures for car road charging and Urban Vehicle Access Regulations (UVARs) are still not widely accepted in Europe. The White Paper stated that congestion costs will increase by about 50% by 2050 and there is a need for evaluation of existing car road charging schemes with provision of incentives to Member States which launch pilot projects for the implementation of schemes along such guidelines. Promoting and encouraging public transport and non-motorised mobility could be a solution.
- 4.18 The White Paper foresaw growing development of alternative fuels (such as electric and hydrogen cell fuels) as a contribution to greening transport. Although in the last ten years

there was improvement and growth in relation to producing alternative fuels, in 2018 only 33% of EU electricity came from renewable energy. The EESC therefore considers that vehicle emissions and their carbon footprint should be measured over their entire lifecycle. Besides, replacing internal combustion engines with electric cars will not change the congestion patterns in our cities.

Brussels, 9 June 2021

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The president of the European Economic and Social Committee
