



ADINA VĂLEAN
MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels
adina.valean@ec.europa.eu

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Speech of Commissioner Adina Vălean- “Central Europe Week: Bolstering Transatlantic Resilience”

Ladies and gentlemen,

Connectivity and free movement make the EU’s single market possible. We learned the value of resilient connectivity at the height of the Covid crisis when uncoordinated actions nearly halted supply chains. The EU reacted fast, issuing clear guidance for sanitary measures and procedures that protected transport workers and enabled them to keep goods flowing at all times.

Now, as we gradually emerge from pandemic restrictions, we need to embed resilience in transport. The Commission is developing contingency plans for use in the event of a new crisis, and even our Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy was upgraded to include a strong resilience pillar.

However, we still need to reinforce our infrastructure to ensure that our supply chains can grow stronger and that Europe can reap the full potential of an increasingly connected global economy. This is especially important in Central and Eastern Europe, since this region represents Europe’s pivot to Middle Eastern and Asian markets.

Historic underdevelopment of infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe must be replaced with a modernisation drive that should increase rail, road, and inland waterways capacity and ensures the latest standards. At the EU level, we are ready to act with financing under the Connecting Europe Facility and Next Generation EU. We are also revising the TEN-T regulation to ensure modern standards.

Enhancing North-South connectivity along the eastern flank of the EU and supporting resilient supply chains between the Baltic and the Mediterranean and the Black Sea are of key interest to the EU for obvious economic but also strategic benefits.

EU policy in the field of the trans-European transport network - our so called TEN-T policy - aims at building an effective, EU-wide and multimodal network of rail, inland waterways, short sea shipping routes and roads linked to urban nodes, maritime and inland ports, airports and terminals across the EU.

It is, therefore, one of the instruments facilitating the development of coherent, high-quality transport infrastructure across the EU, and facilitating the more efficient transport of people and goods, ensuring access to jobs and services, and enabling trade and economic growth.

The upcoming revision of the TEN-T offers a real opportunity to make our trans-European transport network fit for the future. The overarching goal remains unchanged, as the TEN-T must be gradually completed, first with the core network in 2030.

The objective is to make the TEN-T more digital, resilient, and greener, thus supporting the transition towards smart, sustainable, efficient, and safe mobility and stimulating the post-pandemic economic recovery.

Through the revised TEN-T rules, we also aim to increase the resilience of transport infrastructure and logistical chains, enhancing the efficiency of the entire transport system.

The key issues addressed will include:

- The integration of the nine Core Network Corridors with the 11 Rail Freight Corridors in a common set of “European Transport Corridors”, accompanied by the introduction of a new feature: two operational targets for rail within the new European Transport Corridors.
- Digitalisation and innovative technological concepts - they will further increase the efficiency of the transport sector and improve safety, security, comfort, and resilience, fostering European global leadership in mobility.
- The coverage of specific transport infrastructure-related aspects, such as higher technical standards and resistance to natural and man-made disasters, through including alternative alignments in case of accidents or breakdown.
- Increased multimodality within the transport system through an increased focus on transshipment hubs and urban nodes, which are important for the overall functioning of a multimodal network, in particular with regard to the last mile of a journey for passengers and goods.
- The provision of the necessary charging and refuelling infrastructure for alternative fuels in transport.

The new Connecting Europe Facility, with its budget of EUR 25.8, billion will be instrumental in delivering on the TEN-T policy objectives. Most of the actions supported will address sustainable modes of transport such as railways and inland waterways, multimodality, clean urban transport, and alternative fuels in all transport modes.

The EU Action Plan on Military Mobility offers another means to reinforce our resilience and boost the economy while strengthening our transatlantic cooperation.

Transport infrastructure is a key pillar of the Action Plan. We have identified strong synergies between military mobility and the EU’s civilian transport infrastructure policy – the trans-European transport network.

To capitalise on these synergies, we have dedicated a EUR 1.7 billion military mobility budget to invest in dual-use transport infrastructure projects through the Connecting Europe Facility. We will co-fund projects that will benefit both civilian and military purposes: for example; we may strengthen road bridges to sustain convoys of heavy military vehicles and offer a more direct route for lorries carrying commercial goods.

We launched the first call for proposals this September, making available EUR 330 million to co-fund projects. By co-funding up to 50% of the project costs, we will mobilise at least double this in investment in EU transport infrastructure.

Better infrastructure will bolster our resilience, and the investment will create jobs and facilitate the economic recovery. Military mobility is also a key area of the EU's cooperation with NATO. By investing in our security, we are strengthening the transatlantic bond.

Yours sincerely,



Adina VĂLEAN

