



European Economic and Social Committee

TEN/546
**Competitive and resource-
efficient urban mobility**

Brussels, 4 June 2014

OPINION

of the

European Economic and Social Committee

on the

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European
Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Together towards
competitive and resource-efficient urban mobility**

COM(2013) 913 final

Rapporteur: **Edgardo Maria Iozia**

On 7 March 2014, the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, on the

*Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions:
Together towards competitive and resource-efficient urban mobility
COM(2013) 913 final.*

The Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 21 May 2014.

At its 499th plenary session, held on 4 and 5 June 2014 (meeting of 4 June), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 132 votes with 3 abstentions.

*

* *

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1 The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) endorses the Commission communication of 17 December 2013 and attaches great importance to the continuation of programmes that support the development of effective and sustainable urban mobility such as CIVITAS, IEE, etc. The combination of ambitious projects, such as those proposed, and the scarcity of available financial resources calls for a thorough and careful review of all options for urgent initiatives in the area of sustainable mobility.

1.2 The EESC considers it essential to:

- adopt realistic integrated and coordinated plans, that are continually monitored and which focus on both mobility of persons and the logistic chain and which cater for all members of society, especially those with reduced mobility;
- harness the principle of subsidiarity, just as the Commission has wisely struck a balance between the various levels of responsibility, particularly by actively involving the Member States;
- promote the harnessing of financial resources, also by making use of private capital;
- involve the general public, social organisations and civil society, in order to make sustainable mobility a challenge that is taken up by the whole community;
- support the exchange of good practices, through a comprehensive single European portal;
- boost the Covenant of Mayors;

- increase the financial commitment of the EU and the EIB, which should be the drivers for European-scale implementation of the sustainable urban mobility project, which would affect 70% of EU citizens;
 - step up coordination between public authorities and private-sector players that deliver supplementary urban transport services, taking a holistic, targeted approach;
 - endeavour to attain consistent logistics, actively geared to achieving the objectives of "resilient" or "transition" towns, in which all stakeholders work together to enhance the living conditions and health of the local population;
 - manage public-private complementarity, opening the market to competition, provided that there is full compliance with social safeguards, price control and environmental sustainability;
 - devise standard guidelines for the specifications of public transport vehicles, creating a European market in which economies of scale can be achieved with centralised purchasing.
- 1.3 The EESC agrees on the strategic role played by urban mobility in the drive towards smart cities that are on a human scale, able to meet environmental challenges, and adapt to new situations, and emphasises the continuous need to overcome the sector-specific approach that frequently still characterises transport policies.
- 1.4 The measures to be taken should take due account of the need to strike a balance between the social, economic and environmental aspects, the three strands of sustainable development.
- 1.5 The EESC is not opposed to opening up urban transport to competition and the market, provided that the following are safeguarded: workers' rights and jobs, a distributed network, enhancement of the service, and prices. There should be constant monitoring to ensure that there is rigorous compliance with contractual terms.
- 1.6 The EESC believes that an effective, efficient and sustainable transport policy should be based on:
- at EU level
- making sustainable mobility plans an EU-wide experience, involving the city in initiatives on the ground, to improve public perception of the need also to change long-standing patterns of behaviour;
 - a major boost for the Covenant of Mayors on energy efficiency, which includes efficiency in urban mobility;
 - funding of the necessary measures by harnessing EU resources, such as the Structural Funds and Horizon 2020, for research and innovation in the sector;
 - EIB funds at subsidised rates and the development, where possible, of public/private partnerships (PPPs) for creating and managing major urban infrastructure;

at national level

- incentives for transport to become more efficient and less polluting, and the use of new technologies;
- enforcement of the right, in particular of people with reduced mobility, to sustainable mobility;

at local and regional level

- intermodality;
- the development of teleworking clusters;
- joint training policies for public officials and practitioners in the sector, in order to develop unified expertise and strategies;
- targeted and sustainable policies regulating access to central urban areas;
- coordination with areas bordering large urban centres, to achieve unified strategies;
- involving the public in the quest to find the best solutions;
- ongoing monitoring of the results achieved and appropriate and swift adjustments of measures that are not working;
- awareness-raising to encourage responsible use of public and private transport;
- the development of cooperation between undertakings to coordinate transport to and from production complexes and crafts districts; and
- involving the target groups, i.e. groups of people with similar needs, in order to assess together the features of services geared to specific needs.

- 1.7 The EESC underlines the importance of closer cooperation between the competent public bodies and the general public, and refers to the words of the Commission's Action Plan on urban mobility¹ paying particular attention to the mobility needs of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, low-income groups and persons with reduced mobility, who require specific policies.
- 1.8 The EESC believes that the Commission should have once again been robust in tackling these aspects, which constitute unacceptable discrimination. The Commission should ensure that the Member States guarantee this fundamental European right – the right to mobility – for all citizens, without discrimination.
- 1.9 The EESC calls for the issue of poverty and mobility to also be addressed and resolved, just as the EU has done in the case of energy poverty and poverty in other areas; the Member States should provide for measures in support of the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society. The right to mobility is a universal right and cannot be limited to the well-off.
- 1.10 The EESC draws attention to the potential of urban logistics as an element of improved efficiency and sustainability. Logistics should therefore be given adequate attention in urban

¹ COM(2009) 490 final/2.

planning and in cooperation projects. The EESC also welcomes the initiatives planned by the Commission in this field.

- 1.11 The EESC calls on the Commission to draw together all initiatives and policies in the field of urban mobility into a single instrument. There are currently at least five portals dedicated to this issue, which represents a drain on resources and their effectiveness.
- 1.12 Europe and the Member States need to develop a common integrated policy, with a shared and ambitious vision. People need to be educated about alternative and less polluting forms of transport. Education is the primary means of bringing about change: rediscovering the beauty of walking around cities, cycling to get to work or to meet up with friends. Public authorities should encourage this sustainable mobility through cultural initiatives, developing historical or architectural routes in city centres, offering guided walks, and supporting the organisation of cycling tours that draw people's attention due to their lively approach and encourage others to do the same.
- 1.13 Today's cities will undergo far-reaching changes in the areas of architectural and urban planning in the coming decades. The EESC recommends that all available measures be disseminated. ICT, urban innovation and local initiatives are making it possible to improve mobility and to make cities more liveable for future generations.
- 1.14 The EESC recommends giving due consideration to the need for an equitable and even distribution of the urban transport network, so as not to force people who live in areas that are badly served or not served at all by public transport to be confined to modern urban ghettos.
- 1.15 Solid and coherent coordination must be developed between all public and private decision-makers at all levels. Sustainable urban mobility plans, consistent with targets for the climate, the environment and energy, health protection and time and energy savings, which are key drivers for the economy, should become a priority at all levels in the EU.
- 1.16 The Committee advocates the adoption of practical measures aimed at developing paths for cyclists and pedestrians dedicated exclusively to this type of urban mobility; this should be done wherever possible and in connection with public transport intermodal hubs.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Europe is one of the most urbanised continents in the world. Today, more than two thirds of the European population lives in urban areas and this share continues to grow ("Cities of tomorrow" European Commission report, 2011). In many cities, mobility is increasingly difficult and resource inefficient, and is often characterised by chronic traffic congestion, which is estimated to cost EUR 80 billion annually (Total cost arising from congestion: See SEC(2011) 358 final), poor air quality, accidents, noise pollution and high CO₂ emissions. In

Europe, urban mobility is still heavily reliant on the use of conventionally-fuelled private cars.

- 2.2 Siim Kallas, vice-president of the European Commission and Commissioner for Mobility and Transport, said: "Addressing the problems of urban mobility is one of the great challenges in transport today. With coordinated action we can be more successful" (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-1255_en.htm).
- 2.3 The European Parliament and the Council of the EU have acknowledged that improving energy efficiency and energy savings requires adopting appropriate strategies within the transport sector in order to address the problem of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. This rationale led to the adoption of Directive 2009/33/EC of 23 April 2009, which was intended to stimulate the market for clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles, taking into account their energy and environmental impacts throughout their life-cycle.
- 2.4 The **White Paper – Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource-efficient transport system COM(2011) 144 of 28 March 2011** – aims to develop a modern and competitive transport system, stimulating economic growth and employment, reduce European dependence on oil and cut CO₂ emissions.
- 2.5 In the EU, transport is currently responsible for a quarter of all CO₂ emissions and contributes substantially, especially in urban areas, to the deterioration of air quality (through particulates, NO_x, HC and CO). The use of alternative fuels to petrol and diesel would reduce the environmental impact of road transport, provided that these alternative fuels are produced sustainably.
- 2.6 In its opinion on the *Action Plan on urban mobility*², the EESC warmly welcomed the European Commission's 2009 publication of an urban mobility plan, offering local, regional and national authorities ways of providing the best possible, most sustainable quality of life in urban areas. Most of the proposed measures were not, however, binding.
- 2.7 Among others, the objectives for a competitive and resource-efficient transport system proposed by the Commission are to "Halve the use of 'conventionally-fuelled' cars in urban transport by 2030"; and to phase them out completely by 2050; achieve essentially CO₂-free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030 and "by 2050, move close to zero fatalities in road transport"³.
- 2.8 To give a brief overview of the initiatives implemented by the European Union with a view to achieving sustainable urban mobility, this opinion draws attention to the recent Commission communication *Together towards competitive and resource-efficient urban mobility*. With

² [OJ C 21, 21.1.2011, pp. 56-61.](#)

³ COM(2011) 144 final.

their high population densities there is a greater potential for cities to shift the current development model towards a more efficient use of the available resources.

- 2.9 The new environmental challenges that towns and cities and their inhabitants will face in the near future have helped reinforce the crucial importance of urban mobility in building "resilient" or "transition" towns. When considering urban mobility policies, the concept of resilience should provide a decisive push towards a more effective integration of urban change, ensuring an integrated governmental approach to policies for the environment, energy and mobility.
- 2.10 The EESC endorses the use of an integrated approach that promotes measures in the various fields such as the environment and health, clean and energy-efficient technologies, improvements to infrastructure, urban planning and transport, freight delivery logistics, innovation and research, road safety and raising public awareness.
- 2.11 The EESC stresses the importance of the focus on reducing road accidents and improving people's health by adopting long-term strategies aimed at implementing all measures that can help achieve ambitious targets. The value to society of every human life saved by these policies, every accident averted, every citizen protected, cannot be overestimated, and this should be the yardstick for assessing the urgency of the measures.

3. European urban mobility initiatives

- 3.1 European-level strategies and initiatives have been geared towards facilitating forms of sustainable urban mobility, such as promoting innovation in all aspects of urban transport, fostering an intermodal urban system, policies for public transport and journeys on foot and by bicycle, and the mainstreaming of urban mobility into an integrated and strategic framework for urban development. Unfortunately, the available funding has been cut and is not sufficient to cover the initiatives that need to be taken at the various levels. The Member States have also imposed funding cuts on local authorities, which have had to put a brake on their plans to improve urban mobility. What is urgently needed is a radical paradigm shift, a return to the virtuous path of investment and employment, and, above all, a rapid improvement in people's quality of life.
- 3.2 Smart Cities and Communities
- 3.3 The European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on Smart Cities and Communities builds on the Smart Cities and Communities Initiative launched by the European Commission in 2011. It brings together representatives of the public, business and communities and provides a forum in which they can identify, develop and implement innovative solutions and make them a reality. Sustainable urban mobility is one of the main strands the EIP will focus on, together with sustainable neighbourhoods and the built environment, infrastructure and integrated processes in the energy, information and communication technologies and transport sectors.

3.4 CIVITAS

3.5 Since 2002, the CIVITAS initiative, co-financed by the European Commission, has given cities a breath of fresh air by introducing sustainable transport systems in more than 200 European towns and cities and is today an extremely active network in this field. Under Horizon 2020, the Commission plans to extend this initiative to cover the use of innovative technologies to achieve competitive and resource-efficient mobility. The EESC has on several occasions stressed the importance of this initiative and of other initiatives taken to promote sustainable mobility.

3.6 The Trans-European transport network (TEN-T)

3.7 The European Union supports projects of common interest in urban areas, such as improving urban logistics operations which are part of national or international supply chains.

3.8 The Covenant of Mayors

3.9 Only slow progress is being made in shifting towards more sustainable modes of urban mobility. The Covenant of Mayors initiative launched by the Commission in 2008 encourages the signatories to incorporate issues relating to transport and urban mobility into their Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAP), ensuring the involvement of the general public and of civil society as a whole (Covenant of Mayor SEAP guidelines).

4. Gist of the communication

4.1 The Commission communication draws attention to the current difficulties and inefficiency in mobility within Europe's cities, addressing issues such as serious traffic congestion, high CO₂ emissions, air quality, urban road fatalities, and impacts on human health.

4.2 The aim of the communication is to increase support for European cities in their fight against problems relating to urban mobility in order to ensure sustainable development and to achieve the aims of a more competitive and resource-efficient European transport system.

4.3 The Commission will consequently boost its support measures for sustainable mobility in areas with established EU added value, as follows:

4.3.1 *Sharing experiences and showcasing best practices*: appropriate measures for disseminating best practices, dedicated web portals and the establishment of a team of European experts are at the heart of the activities that the Commission has decided to embark on.

4.3.2 *Providing targeted financial support*: using the Structural Funds and European investment, the EU will be able to put in place practical and shared measures, particularly in the EU's less

well-developed regions. Structural Funds, European Social Fund and other available funds will continue to finance the expenditure commitments for urban transport.

4.4 Supporting research and innovation: the CIVITAS 2020 initiative under Horizon 2020 will enable towns, business, universities and other stakeholders to develop and test new approaches to problems of urban mobility.

4.4.1 More specifically, the Commission proposes to work on:

4.5 Involving the Member States: the Commission calls on Member States to create the right conditions for towns, cities and metropolises to develop and implement their plans for sustainable urban mobility. This is the Commission's main focus, and it is vital that it receives wholehearted and positive responses from the Member States. Subsidiarity is an essential, win-win strategy here, provided that everyone plays their part with real commitment.

4.6 Working together: the Commission puts forward a set of specific recommendations to leverage coordinated action across all levels of government and between the public and private sectors on four aspects:

- urban logistics,
- urban access regulation,
- the deployment of urban Smart Transport System (STS) solutions, and
- urban road safety.

Brussels, 4 June 2014

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Henri Malosse
